

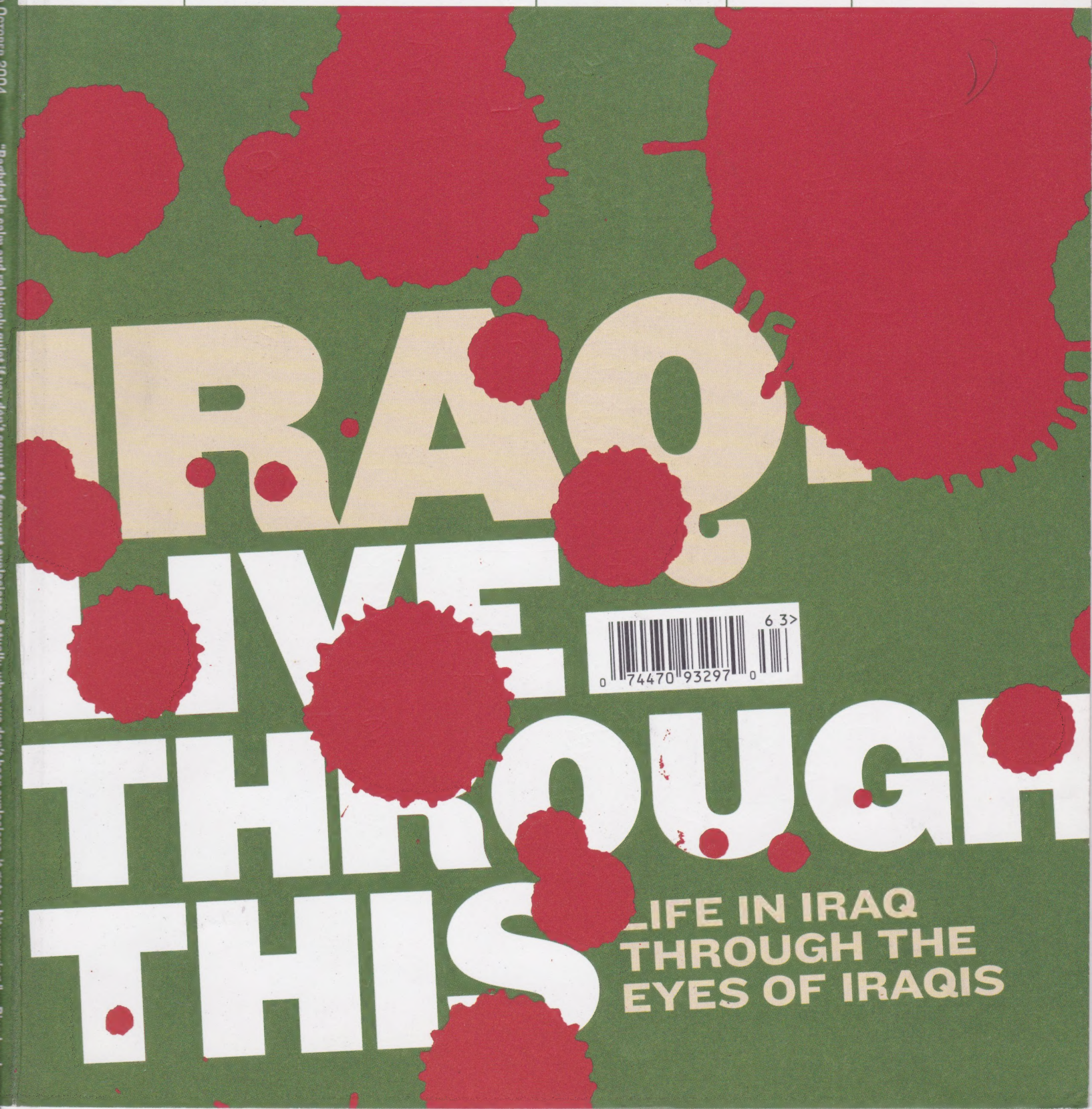
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notes from underground

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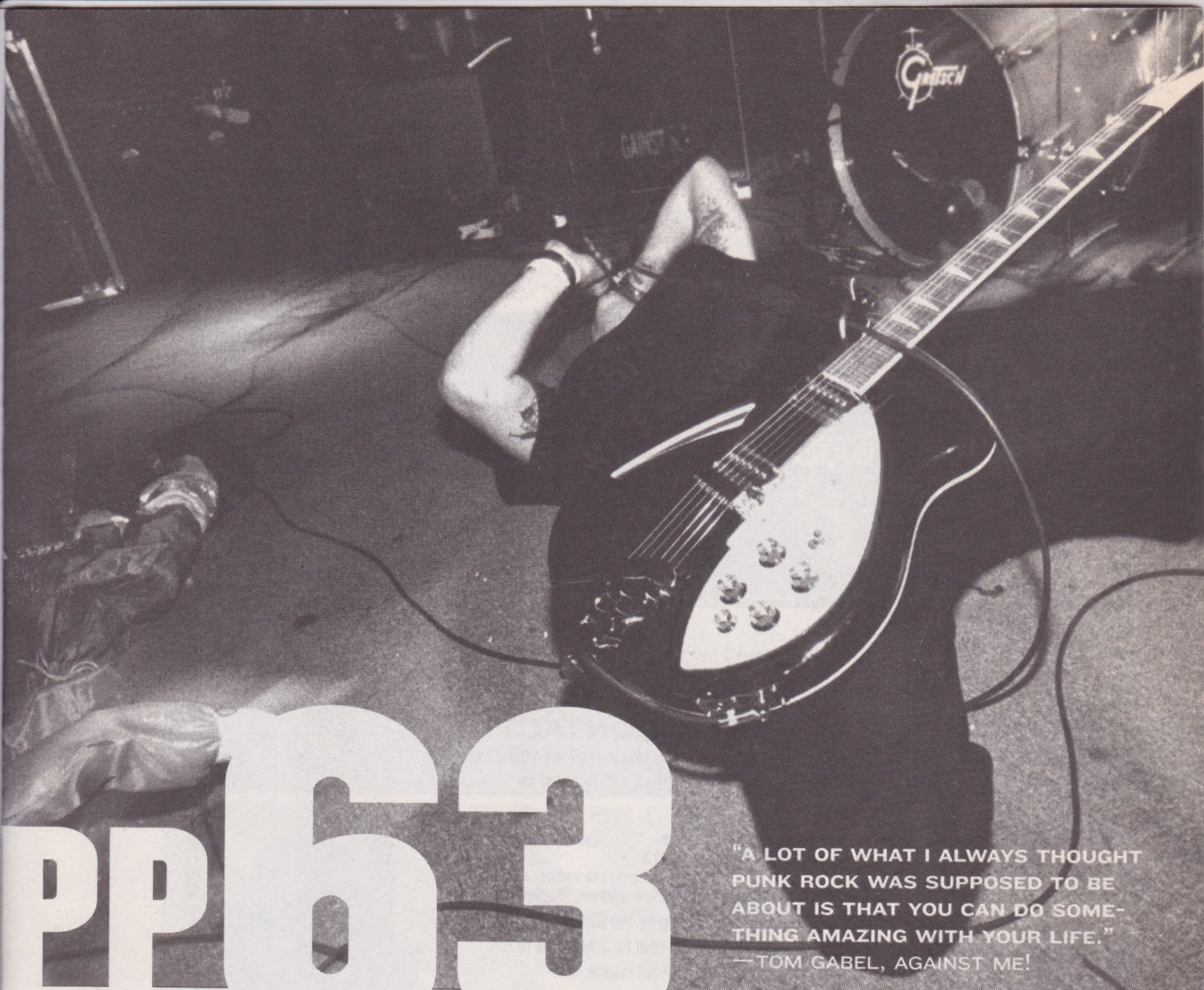


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PP63

|| Static

*E-voting opponents turn the heat up;
jazzing up comics with Bughouse; getting
into Grooves magazine; Radiotakeover
takes over (dot com); Hella, well, cool;
Get Your War on gets sophisticated; more!*

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the risks

intro63

Sitting down with a stack of *Punk Planets*, it's a bit overwhelming just how much ink we've spent covering Iraq over the last six years. For a magazine that still gets shelved in the music section of most stores, we've devoted more pages to Iraq than we have any other single subject—including bands. Considering our bare-bones staff and extraordinarily limited budget, that we've been able to regularly cover a country all but entirely inaccessible to civilians and halfway across the globe is a testament to how necessary alternative viewpoints on Iraq have been over the years.

It used to be that we covered Iraq because no one else did—not in the mainstream media, nor in the independent press. Nowadays we cover Iraq because, even though it's on the front page of your newspaper every day and the lead story on cable news channels every night, there are many voices caught in the middle of the conflict that are left out of traditional coverage. It is those voices that, from the very beginning of our Iraq reports, we have worked to document.

"Iraq: Live Through This," however (a full 36 issues after our first Iraq report, for those keeping count), is the first time

that the voices of Iraqis themselves have told their own stories. Conceived of by *Punk Planet* contributing editor Jeff Guntzel (who has supplied most of our Iraq coverage over the years), "Live Through This" introduces us to Riverbend, a 24-year-old blogger writing from inside war-torn Baghdad. Riverbend's story is harrowing and heart-breaking, unique and a little bit hopeful. It's the story of a person not unlike you or me living in a situation that is all but unlivable; a situation that those living in Iraq have had to deal with every day for a year and a half.

There's plenty of other interesting stories in this issue of *Punk Planet*. From two separate pieces about the harrowing world of illegal immigration, to a number of inspiring and amazing bands telling their tales, PP63 is another fine issue. Thanks for picking it up.

See you in the winter,

DAN

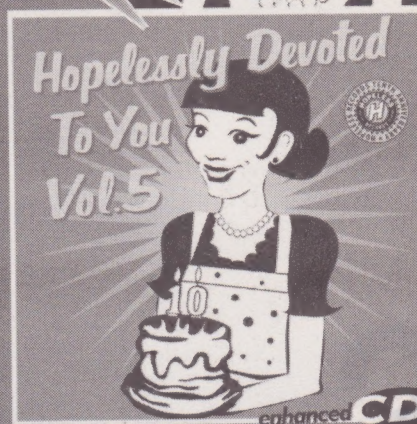
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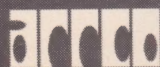
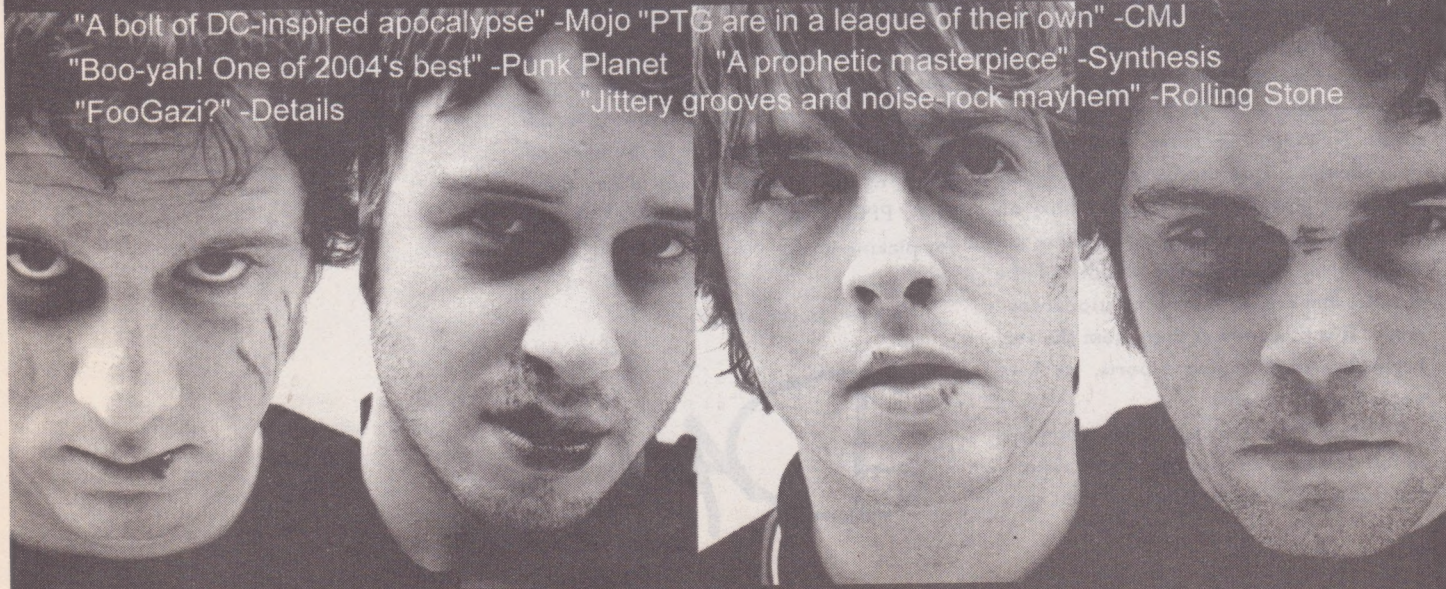
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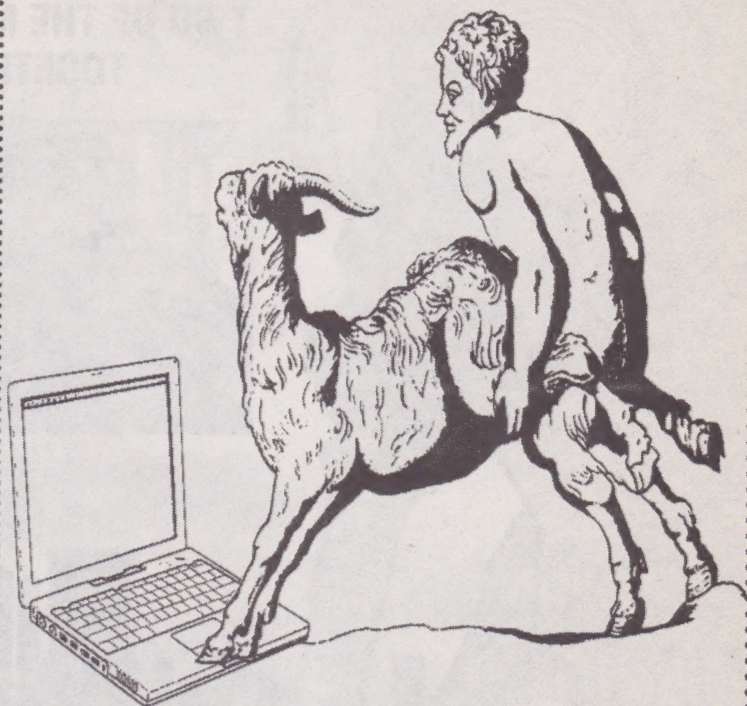
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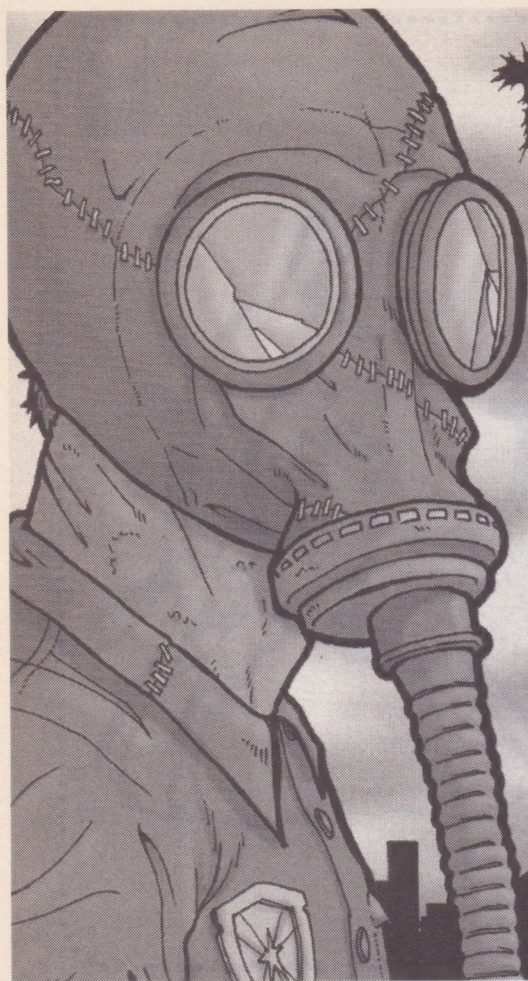
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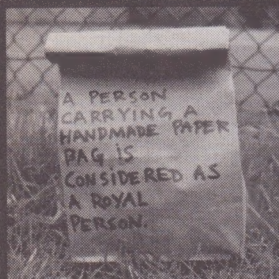


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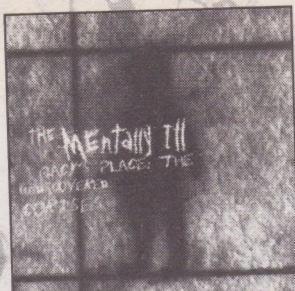
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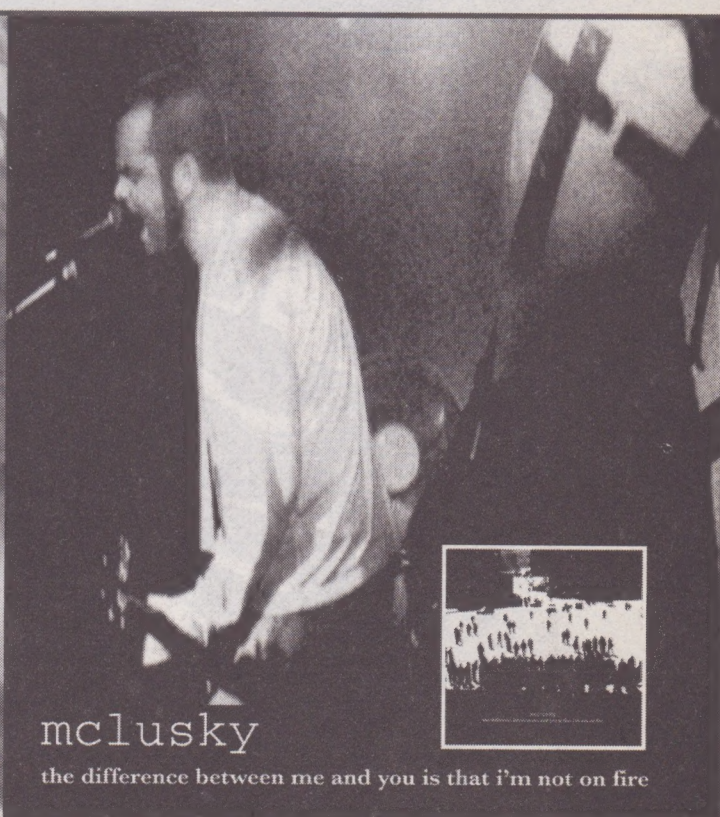


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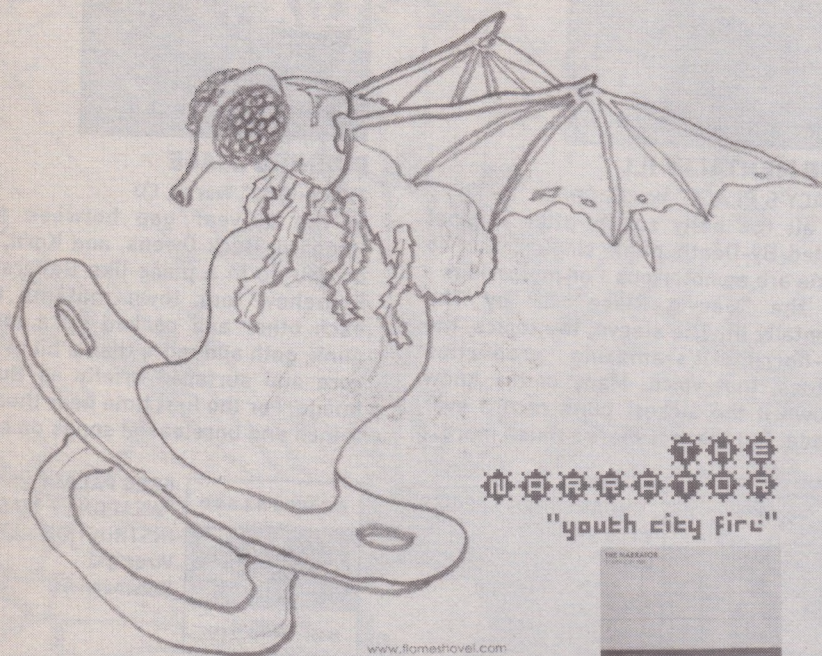
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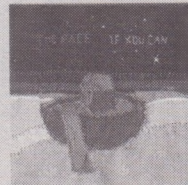
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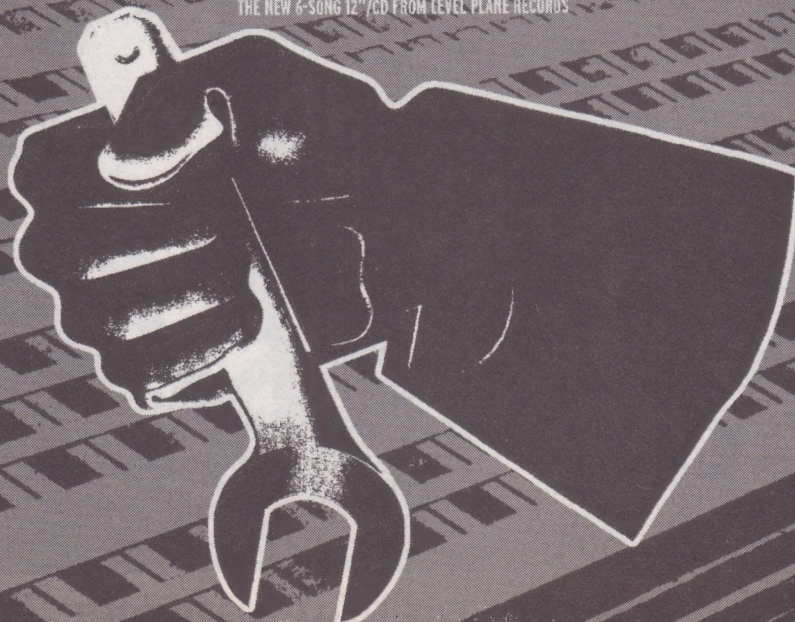


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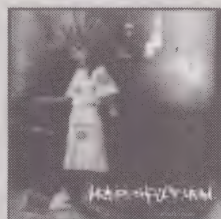
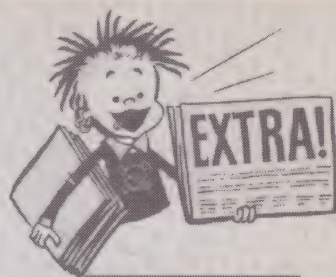
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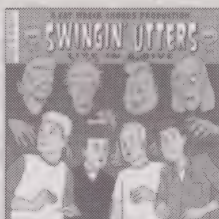
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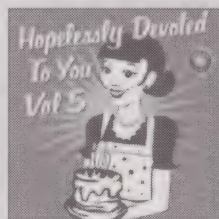
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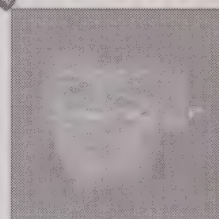
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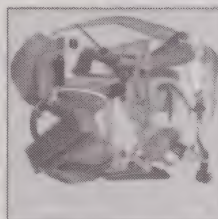
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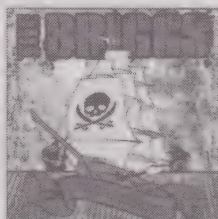
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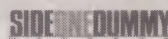
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AS THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION NEARS, CITIZENS REVOLT AGAINST PAPERLESS VOTING

In June, Carroll County officials in Ohio opted to not buy an electronic voting machine in time for November's presidential election, and Dan Kozminski says his group should get some of the credit for it. Kozminski's Citizens' Alliance for Secure Elections (CASE) is one of many campaigns—operating on both the local and national levels—created specifically to push governments to ensure that if they jump on the electronic voting bandwagon, they first guarantee that the new mechanism will include a paper trail for every vote.

"Many of our members have attended boards of election meetings. We've faxed them. We have e-mailed them many times, and sent out regular mail. We have been working with VerifiedVoting.org and the

Electronic Frontier Foundation to encourage their members in Ohio to call their boards of elections to ask them please not to go forward," says Kozminski.

Across the United States, groups and movements have sprung up in recent months fighting to ensure that everyone who is entitled is able to vote on November 3 and that those ballots are fairly counted. And their demand for paper backups to electronically-cast votes is an important part of that effort.

According to Kozminski, CASE has played a part in the decisions of 28 of 31 counties in the state of Ohio to not take advantage of new federal funding to buy the machines in 2004.

"Our position is that electronic voting is probably going to be the wave of the

future, says Kozminski. "I'm comfortable with computers—I used to be a computer programmer—but they're rushing into this whole procedure without really thinking through the issues, and without putting forward a very secure, reliable verifiable technology."

Echoes of that view are being heard across the US as the election draws nearer.

One of the most outspoken voices is that of Bev Harris, author of *Black-Box Voting: Ballot Tampering in the 21st Century*. She is a journalist who has made it her mission to uncover hi-tech voting fraud.

With the election around the corner, Harris is calling for volunteers to join a monitoring team, which she calls the "Clean-Up Crew," that will serve as poll workers, election judges and poll watchers in November.

"Some Clean-Up Crew members will act as communications relays to get problems to the media instantly. Additional members will

collect information needed for prompt litigation and monitor results for statistical anomalies," says Harris in an e-mail.

Paperless voting machines were one of many issues to emerge from the 2000 presidential election. When Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002, it promised to provide states with the necessary funds to replace antiquated voting systems such as punch card ballots. However, HAVA made no provisions that require the new systems to provide voters a paper ballot, or any form of paper trail that could be used to verify the election results.

Without that proof, says Kozminski, you have "no way at all to audit the results, to have a meaningful recount. The only way you can recount is to regurgitate the same information out of these machines, and that's not a recount".

He tells the story of an exercise in the northeast state



"You come out of the water to sun yourself on a rock and you think, 'I am a bug.'"

WITH HIS SERIES *BUGHOUSE*, GRAPHIC NOVELIST STEVE LAFLER REVISITS THE HEYDAY OF JAZZ—THROUGH BUGS.

In many ways, the graphic novel series *Bughouse* is pretty similar to all the other stories you've heard about the jazz world—full of drugs, women, chaos and brilliance—but Steve Lafler's take is like nothing you've ever seen before. The twisted lovechild of William S Burroughs, David Cronenberg, and Miles Davis, *Bughouse* follows the members of a jazz quartet as they play music, dodge the law, fight their addictions, and disentangle themselves from their increasingly complicated love lives. This all sounds familiar, right? Well instead of people, picture *bugs*—bugs with guns, bugs on drugs, bugs in love, and bugs jamming long into night.

The 47-year-old Lafler lives in Oakland, California with his wife, Serena and their three-year-old son Max. To pay the bills, Lafler runs Hey! Activewear, a T-shirt design and screenprinting shop. Recently, I had the chance to catch-up with Steve as he prepares for the February 2005 release of *Scalawag*, the latest entry in the *Bughouse* series.

of Maryland, where officials hired a computer expert to try to hack into a staged election. It took the expert only five minutes "using software an eighth-grader could download off the Internet," says Kozminski.

Other accounts of real and potential voting machine fraud are numerous and growing daily. With the projected number of electronic voting booths being prepped for use this year increasing, activists like Kozminski insist that now is the time to fix the systems.

It is estimated that in November, about a third of US citizens registered to vote will do so electronically, another third will use optical scan machines, 20 percent

will use punch cards, 13 percent will vote with lever machines and the remainder will use other options, according to company Election Data Services Inc.

The national movement to verify electronic votes took another step forward in June when the progressive Web powerhouse Moveon.org launched its own pro-paper ballot campaign, in the form of an online petition citizens can e-mail to the president.

"I urge you to make sure all voters can verify their votes," the petition says. "We shouldn't have to trust electronic voting machines—we should be able to verify our votes on paper. November is coming soon.

Please protect my vote as if it were your own,"

For the Cleveland, Ohio based Kozminski, it's a message he says his state is starting to take seriously. Only three counties in Ohio have indicated they will definitely go electronic. This, he says, is good news.

"This has become a passion for me, along with everybody else in our organization, to protect democracy."

—Marty Logan

A version of this story originally appeared on the Global Information Network, www.globalinfo.org

Family Circus

BROTHER/SISTER BAND THE FIERY FURNACES KEEP THE SIBLING RIVALRY FIRES STOKED.

Depending on who you ask in the Fiery Furnaces, the Brooklyn-based brother and sister act fronted by Eleanor and Matt Friedberger, they may try and convince you their chosen band name is a reference to a story in the book of Daniel—but that may just be a line of shit. I

probably should have gotten to the bottom of this when I met with the two of them at the Chelsea Hotel in New York, but when only Eleanor showed (her brother was sick at home) I figured we'd be better off talking about the family bond that led to *Blueberry Boat* (Rough Trade),

Why bugs and jazz? What is it about these influences that inspire you?

It came from a number of things. When I was a little kid, I saw these animated shorts on TV that Max Fleisher made in the '30s. The whole thing is set to swing jazz—every movement is choreographed to the beat and the characters are essentially rapping over the beat. I was all, "WOW! I want to do that! I want to be that!"

But why bugs?

I've always made a connection between people and bugs in my imagination. Say it's summer and it's way hot: You're out skinny dipping, you come out of the water to sun yourself on a rock and you think, "I am a bug." Maybe it's just me. As you might expect, thoughts like these are enhanced and embellished with the help of blotter acid.

And so where did the story come from?

The premise for the story came out of problems that I was having in my life. I wanted to figure out why so many artists and musicians are so hopelessly addicted to drugs and drink. I might have posed the question like this: "Steve, you're a damn good cartoonist, but why the hell are you getting hosed all the time?" I'd been drinking like a fish for too long and was looking to literally draw myself out of a tight spot. ¶ At some point, I picked up *Miles*, the autobiography of Miles Davis, and the book just blew me away. It's

their brilliant sophomore effort that jumps from punk to blues to vaudevillian folk—often in the course of a single song. As it turns out, their relationship is even more unusual than the music they create together.

The first thing I was told when I was handed your record was, "You won't get this on your first listen." Have you found that to be true?

Yes, but in a good way. The people who have heard it usually say that with every new listen they get a little more out of it, which is nice. But I like things that hit you immediately, too.

For most of the people I know, that's how they reacted to your first record, *Gallowsbird's Park*. It was more of a pop record.

It was a pop record?

That may be a bit of a stretch, but *Blueberry Boat* certainly isn't pop. What do you attribute that shift to?

Matt wrote nearly all of it. I think that after the first record, we were suddenly in this proper band, and he and I weren't really getting along very well, so he took control of the situation. Not in a bad way, but . . .

Did it feel like someone had to?

I just removed myself. Before we started doing this stuff properly, we used to hang out and make up songs together for fun. Suddenly when it became a job, it wasn't fun. We didn't want to do it anymore, me especially. I know that sounds terrible, but that's what happened immediately

a rip-roaring adventure story about a low-life musical adventurer who, with the help of a few friends, revolutionized music around the world. It all came together when I saw David Cronenberg's film adaptation of William S Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*. The soundtrack was done by Ornette Coleman and, together with Cronenberg's dark humor, it creates this world that is obliquely related to the one described in *Miles*. The combination of the book and the movie helped me conceive an aesthetic for putting my idea across.

What other artists, be they from the world of comics, art, literature, or music influence your work?

When I started *Bughouse*, my wife recommended that I read Dawn Powell, who wrote novels about bohemian life in Manhattan of the '40s and '50s. They're an amazing example of narrative structure based on character. When I sat down to draw *Bughouse*, I listened to a lot of classic bebop—Bird, Miles, Sun Ra, and, of course, Coltrane—but I was really stuck on Howlin' Wolf and The Gramps. They lead you down all sorts of musical side alleys that just get weirder—and better—as you go. They captured a wild midnight spirit I wanted to invoke in the book. —Ben Tanzer

The Bughouse series is available from Topshelf Comics. www.topshelfcomics.com

diately after we signed with Rough Trade and started doing this as more of a job.

Were your contributions to the record just lyrical then?

Not even that. [laughs]

Really?

It wasn't like he said, "I'm going to write all these songs and it's going to be my record." It wasn't as manipulative a change as that. But it's his "masterpiece." [laughs]

That was what he called it even before it was recorded.

One of the things you've often said is that you don't expect to be doing this in 10 years time. Do you still feel that way?

Yes, I do. But in the last five months I've also felt like we've finally become a good live band.

That's been really satisfying. We played in DC on Saturday opening for Mission Of Burma, and it was one of the first times this felt like a real job. People really liked it and we knew what we were doing and, for me, that was really strange. There was no nervous energy; I wasn't thinking, "Am I going to fuck this up tonight?" the whole time. I don't think anyone else was thinking that, either.

What's still to learn?

Certainly with the business side we have no clue of what's going on, and there's a lot about songwriting that I could still learn. Matt could sit down and write six songs a day because he knows how to do that. When we first started writing songs, I would use old



photo/Wayne McCarty

"Nothing says 'evil' within the context of pro-wrestling more eloquently than feathers."

INDEPENDENT PRO WRESTLER TERRANCE GRIEP JR STANDS ALONE AS THE ONLY OPENLY GAY ATHELETE IN THE RING.

Recently named as one of the Nine Toughest Gay Guys In America by *Gay Outdoors*, Terrance Griep, Jr., is a professional comic writer by day and, as Tommy "The SpiderBaby" Saturday, a professional wrestler by night. Though his two career choices seem to signal that he just doesn't want to grow up, Griep has made a political statement by being the only openly gay wrestler on the pro circuit. I sat down with Griep to discuss his transition from writing about super-heroes to playing a super-villain and how his openness about his sexuality has affected his wrestling career.

How did you first start wrestling?

I had worked for Midwest Pro Wrestling as their "heel," or bad guy, commentator since August 2002. They had a terrific training program and I decided to try out for it. Once I started wrestling in front of a live audience, I surprised everyone—myself included—at being quite proficient at cheesing people off, which is a bad guy wrestler's primary job.

folk song lyrics just to kick-start the process. I would be too embarrassed to show him some of my own lyrics.

Wait—why did you choose to be in a band with this person again?

He is the most critical person I've met in my entire life. [laughs] I do put myself in this situation where I feel like I'm nervous about showing him something. Sometimes it gets to the point where I feel like not doing it because he's going to be a bully about it. But he always pushes me harder than someone else might. It's good to have high standards, you know?—Trevor Kelley

Get burned at: www.thefieryfurnaces.com

Going Underground

GROOVES MAGAZINE BRINGS A WELCOME FOCUS ON THE SUBTERRANEAN TO ELECTRONIC MUSIC PUBLISHING.

The cover of the 13th issue of *Grooves* is so straightforward, it would be hard to miss the singularity of this underground electronic quarterly's vision. Featuring the headline "Download This!" as the foreground for a bright pink back-drop bordered by darkened telephone poles, the winter/spring issue of this New Jersey-based publication features all of the elements that make *Grooves* such a good read for anyone interested in contemporary independent music culture.

Moving from the excellent cover feature article on digital music distribution to articles on artists ranging from Oakland avant-hip hop icons cLOUDED to German electro-wierdo Felix Kubin, a live review of a "laptop battle" in Philadelphia, and pages upon pages of software and hardware reviews, *Grooves* is a magazine preoccupied with production as much as it is new music. Or, to put in the most laudatory of punk terms, *Grooves* is all about DIY, albeit from a distinctly post-techno angle.

I spoke to editor and founder Sean Portnoy one Saturday afternoon in early June about the magazine, his sense of its place in the world of electronic music media, and more.

Tell me a bit about *Grooves* right now. Where is it going?

It started as slightly more than a Xeroxed fanzine. I made 750 copies that cost me \$1,200 bucks. It was all I could do with Pagemaker, which wasn't much. Since then I've had help from a couple of people to make *Grooves* better designed and cleaner. It's not high tech, but more in line with the aesthetic of the music that it's covering. Right now our print

You are also a comic writer. Did you always want to be one or the other as a kid?

Yeah, both. But I never believed either was possible.

How long have you been out to friends and family?

Well, I first became OK with being a homo in 1996. I never perpetrated a big, dramatic outing, I just stopped being "in." If a friend asked, "What're you doing this weekend?" I'd answer, "I've got a date." "What's her name?" would follow. "Josh" would be my answer. My friends and family did the math pretty quickly. Most of them knew I was gay before I was willing to admit it to myself.

How long have you been out to the wrestling community?

Well, I was pretty well known within the comics community as a gay comics professional when I signed on with MPW in August of 2002. Someone Googled me, as I knew someone would, and within a few weeks of my starting there, everyone knew about me. But no one seemed to care! I approached the powers that be at MPW about making my gender identity into a political statement during the summer of 2003 while I was training to be a wrestler. All I presented to them was that it was an opportunity to generate some publicity for MPW. What I personally wanted to achieve was increased positive GLBT visibility. I think I achieved both goals.

I saw a photo of you wearing a boa on the Midwest Pro Wrestling website. Do you call attention to your sexuality at all when you are in the ring?

run is 12,000, and that's been steady for while. What I would really like to do is to increase our distribution, especially in terms of getting *Grooves* into as many indie shops as possible, but it's difficult to track.

How does *Grooves* distinguish itself from magazines like *XLR8R* and *URB* that write about the same genre?

URB does cover some of the more underground stuff, but it's not that big a focus for them. They sell a hundred thousand or so copies per issue, so they have to appeal to a broader audience. We're more gear-centric than *XLR8R*. They do cover some of what we do, but they also cover a lot of the art

and indie fashion scenes. *XLR8R* also has a much bigger print run than we do. In the same way that magazines like *Magnet* and *Punk Planet* focus on specific things, we focus on some of the smaller labels whose releases *XLR8R* might review, but wouldn't necessarily run a profile of the person behind it.

What do you think electronic music's significance is today?

A few years ago, electronic music was hyped as the next big thing. That obviously didn't pan out. Now it has been relegated to a niche. What's probably of lasting importance is the way that experimental electronic musicians grapple with new technology. That

No. The whole point of *The SpiderBaby* was to present a gay wrestling character whose gender identity was in his background and not the thrust of his gimmick. *The SpiderBaby*—who I think of as a gay Ric Flair, a pampered playboy who just happens to be attracted to men—is different from traditional gay wrestling characters in this regard, as well as the fact that he's a declared homo, while Gorgeous George and his bleached ilk were only tacitly so, their flamboyance notwithstanding. I started wearing the feather boas simply because as the bad guy commentator, I was there to flesh out the wrestlers' characters, not my own, so I needed a visual cue to tell fans instantly that I was a bad guy and nothing says 'evil' within the context of pro wrestling more eloquently than feathers. When I go to the ring as a wrestler, I seldom wear the boas.

In an article on *Sportsfanmagazine.com*, you said, "I am the first [gay wrestler] to make a quasi-political point out of his gender identity." How are you making this point?

Well, there's just plain on-the-record visibility for one thing. I'm told that pro wrestling is replete with gay men—although I have yet to meet even one—but it's still a let's-not-talk-about-it-in-front-of-the-cameras thing. On a more subtle level, I'm sending a message that it's okay to boo *The SpiderBaby* because of what he *does*, but it's not okay to boo him for who he *is*. And I must say, MPW's fans have been absolutely wonderful in this and every regard.

—Amber Drea

Griep wrestles as Spiderbaby for Midwest Pro Wrestling:

eventually gets filtered into mainstream music, like the Neptunes and Timbaland's hip-hop productions. However, even the most mainstream trance stuff is not going top 10 and getting played all around.

Is there any ethos of anti-commercialism in electronic music like there is in punk?

It's probably a continuum. There's a difference between selling enough records so that you can tour and not have to be working another job, and selling one of your tracks to a beer ad. I think there's a pretty healthy disparity between what the mainstream folks, like the BTs and the

Oakenfolds, do, and what's done in the underground.

How so?

The same sorts of things as in punk. There's a suspicion that mainstream artists are formulaic; that they are living a lifestyle; that they are tied into corporate things like parties hosted by big liquor companies. I think a lot of the same sort of controversies as in punk pop up in electronic music. In terms of dealing with unscrupulous club and event organizers and all kinds of label politics, it's all the same stuff. It's just a laptop instead of a guitar. —Joel Schalit

Get in the groove at www.groovesmag.com

GALLERY: In Dreams

ARTWORK BY ASHLEY BAXTER



Taking it Over

RADIOTAKEOVER.COM FINDS SUCCESS MIXING TECH SAVVY WITH PUNK'S SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

The idea is pretty simple: an online community where bands can upload their music and anyone in the world can listen to it—all for free, without any strings attached. Radiotakeover.com isn't the first company to think of it, but it may be the first to do it successfully.

"To really sum it up," says Radiotakeover founder/owner Shawn Van Der Poel, "it's an online radio station that allows the users to be station managers."

At a time when station managers at commercial radio stations seem like nothing more than pawns of major corporations, people feel especially

alienated from radio. At Radiotakeover, they can tap into one of seven continuously running, non-genre-specific music streams and request songs from the site's one-plus terabyte library (that's 1,000 gigabytes, folks). Any band in the library can be played on the stream, whether it's Piebald or some group that's never played outside their hometown. And all the bands (with a few exceptions) are independent.

Van Der Poel, 28, started Radiotakeover nearly five years ago while working for a software company. A high school dropout and member of the New Jersey hardcore community, he started an

Internet service provider out of his basement in the early '90s. While touring with his band, Blue Sky Fade, in the late '90s, Van Der Poel experienced firsthand the difficulty of getting his music heard. Yet he knew that the Internet made information dissemination incredibly easy, so Van Der Poel merged his technical expertise with his experiences in the hardcore scene.

"One thing the Internet doesn't do very well is build a community," he says. "You can go online and download one song and listen to it, but you have to know what bands you're looking for. The cool thing about [Radiotakeover] is everyone's like, 'This band is cool' or 'This band is cool.' It allows other people to be turned on to new things."

Each song on the site is re-

encoded upon receipt by Radiotakeover's six-person tech team, who normalize the song (make sure the levels are consistent) to ensure it sounds good.

Radiotakeover uses an elaborate song request system that assigns priority to each request, depending on when the user logged in and request guidelines. The site's also introducing a "karma" system where users can rate each other and which affects their request priority.

"If you're a jerkoff on the message board, people rate you as a jerkoff, and your priority becomes less," Van Der Poel explains. Or if you always request the same band or same songs, it hurts your rating. "It allows the community to govern itself and weed out the jerkoffs."

Radiotakeover has more





"When people come to see us play, they come to see us play. They're not coming to see us re-create the record."

IN THE STRANGE WORLD OF HELLA, RIVERS OF MUSIC FLOW INSIDE YOU.

No matter what you're into, when you listen to Hella for the first time, you can't help but appreciate the precision of the drum programming. Each manic hit is placed perfectly over top of guitarist Spencer Seim's jazz chords and blistering runs. The level of musical deftness Hella displays on their new record, *The Devil Isn't Red*, boggles the mind. Their songs change from jazz influenced freak-outs, to slow paced guitar work, to electronic interludes at the drop of a hat. Quite frankly, it's surprising that the band doesn't induce an occasional seizure or heartattack. Luckily, audience members seem to make it through Hella shows without incident. They merely bob their heads, or dance awkwardly, trying to keep up with the odd time signatures.

I caught up with Spencer Seim and Zach Hill in San Diego's Che Cafe after an intense live set.

A lot of people think of you as a complex and intricate band, but the name "Hella" gives the band a straight up rock vibe it's an interesting paradox.

the mainstream for over half a century. His impassioned readings challenge his audience, daring them to fulfill the artist's true purpose: to drive social transformation.

Do you think you came to poetry through politics, or the other way around?

I have to say in all honesty that I think the political climate of life influences my work directly. The first poem I remember writing was a song-poem I wrote for the block party my father put on at the end of the Second World War. I was born in 1933, so I was 12 years old when the war ended. I had an early identification with what was going on in the world and with the viewpoint of communist revolution. Don't forget, in 1948 there was an attempt

to break away from the two party system in the US when the Progressive party was formed. That was the year that Paul Robeson, who was attached to that party, was stoned in New York by fascist thugs. That particular period—in 1948, so I was 15—helped form my consciousness.

Reading through a lot of your work, politics, eroticism, and spirituality are so intertwined, they're almost tangled up together.

Personally I think that the responsibility of any poet or artist, given that we live in an age of boundless subjectivity, is to deepen his or her perspective. All the instruments surrounding us are there to make us more amusingly exterior. By that I also mean that we are

more alienated from some central cores of our lives. The struggle for art and artists is to communicate that depth. In this contemporary world, shallowness supersedes depth in many respects; people are torn apart, alienated by a hundred different things in the course of their lives, so structure becomes an essential part in what I mean to communicate.

It seems like there's a balancing act between the written word and the spoken word in your work.

Well, let's put it this way: There has been a change in the poetry of this society since the Vietnam War. At some point, the microphone began to usurp written poetry. Spoken word developed as a particular movement after-

ward, but the beat movement opened it up. I was brought up in the tradition of the poem on the page. I don't know how to reconcile this. I probably never will.

A lot of your fascination revolves around a certain street aesthetic. How does that differ from most of so-called beat era poems?

When Kerouac really was heralded, you had a relationship with the advertising media and the big publishers. In a certain sense, that world has always been inimical to me. The first book I wrote was self-published in New York, around '52. It was just a four-page self-published thing. My trajectory then was to reject the New York publishing thing. I said "Look, I'm not going to

Spencer: Some people say, "Before I heard the band I thought it would be like Sublime." Some reviewers look at the word "hella" meaning "very," which we didn't think of in the beginning. We just thought it was a funky thing to call a band. But I think having a name that has all these different interpretations works because we're doing a lot different stuff all at one time. The music can be looked at as complex, but when we're playing we screw around so much that it almost stops being complex. We've played these songs so much that we can do it with our eyes closed.

Zach: That's why we do a lot of trial-and-error in front of an audience—that's the only way we're going to achieve something higher than just the songs themselves. The way I perceive it, when people come to see us play they're coming to see us *play*; they're not coming to see us re-create the record. The whole point of performing on stage is that you let the audience see you for exactly what you are. We want to be naked and out in the open in front of an audience; that's how you show them that you're still working and that you don't take the music for granted.

Something relatively new to your performances is that you have someone come up and sing a couple of songs. How does having a third person on stage with you affect the dynamic of Hella?

Spencer: It started off when Dan Elkan let us know he was interest-

ed in making vocals for our songs. He was like, "Hey I recorded some vocals" for the song, "Republic of Rough and Ready," from our first record, *Hold Your Horse Is*. We liked it, so we put it on *Bitches Ain't Shit But Good People*. It's cool to have him play live. We like throwing new blood into the mix. He's a bouncy little larva, and he's a good singer.

Zach: We're just trying new things in front of people. We don't see ourselves as having some sort of context or image to uphold, so we do what we want to do. That's why we record different-sounding records. Anything we do between the two of us is Hella, so it doesn't matter if it's a gothabilly record, a reggae record, or a gospel record. The next record is going to be all bass, bass drum and maybe some hi-hat and maybe some back-up vocals.

Spencer: How about *only* back-up vocals?!

Between the constant re-invention in Hella and your numerous outside projects, how much music do you have in you?

Zach: We make music all day long, regardless of whether we're together. We both have a constant river flowing inside of each of us. There are tons of fish swimming in it, so we just have to glurp them up until we have enough to make a record. —Gregory Adams

Hella records on Kill Rock Stars: www.killrockstars.com

waste my time on this. I'm going to publish with small presses. It won't be such vast distribution, so what?" And I've maintained that. ¶ When I got to Los Angeles, I ran into people with some real integrity along those lines, people like Wallace Berman and George Herbert. These were artist-poets who published in small presses. I try to stay close to an

underground sensibility. And in my poems I try to represent moments of underground sensibility. Once you get into the bigger realm—the realm that's more established—a certain kind of importance is diminished. It's always been that way.

—Eric Zassenhaus

Hirschmann's most recent book, Front Lines, is available at www.citylights.com

"They can't be flimsy things."

UPSTART FASHIONISTAS BLOOD AND GUTS TAKE A PUNK ROCK APPROACH TO CLOTHING DESIGN.

What do you get when you cross post-technological nightmare-theory with a love of classic lines and well-made vintage cloth-

ing? Blood & Guts, —a 10-month strong clothing line created by K8 Wince and Kathleen Wise.

Based out of San Diego,

Wince and Wise have combined their talents for art, pattern-making, and sewing to produce skirts, purses, T-shirts, corsets, and jackets slashed with bright colors and vivid, jagged drawings. Purses drip with reds and yellows, screaming figures, and pulsating lines. This is high fashion with a relatively low price and it's all sweat-shop-free.

"It's a way of making a statement," says Wince. "You look at fashion magazines, at pictures of people on a runway, and what does it really say when someone's on a runway wearing a huge Victorian skirt and they have six-inch bands of yellow eye makeup and their hair is green and it's sticking up?

Well, that looks crazy and cool, but I think we want to say something a little bit more."

And the two women do. Creating clothes that are both extreme in design but wearable for the average woman is a goal that they both share.

"Wearability is a big influence," explains Wise. "Real clothes that you can pull out of your closet and actually do something in. For K8, being on tour, they need to be clothes she can wear on tour. They can't be flimsy things."

The two women were close friends previous to establishing the clothing line. Wise' husband Dan is the guitarist player for Kill Me Tomorrow, the melodically



"I try to do it with a little more of an artistic approach to counter the whole mass-production mentality."

PORTLAND RECORD LABEL AESTHETICS MAKES SMART MUSIC LIVE UP TO ITS NAME.

Aesthetics would've been an ostentatious name for a record company if Ken Dyber hadn't spent the last nine years backing it up. It's an anomaly: it's run like a boutique label with an emphasis on artistry—complete with gorgeous packaging—but Dyber is also strong in his overall dedication to politics, especially outspoken against the US over-consumption of oil and the ensuing Iraq war.

Most of the artists on Aesthetics have their thumbs in all variation of arty pie—multi-city electronic/poetry outfit Pulseprogramming even comes equipped with its own video artist, poet and art directors. Aesthetics releases run the gamut from instrumental, ambient post-rock (Windsor for the Derby, 33.3) to experimental hip-hop (Seth P Brundel) to explosive dubby post-punk (The Eternals). Recently Dyber relocated his whole operation from Chicago to Portland, Oregon, where he has opened a storefront and begun distributing that city's many electronic micro-labels.

spasmodic band fronted by bass player K8 along with drummer/singer Zack Wentz. After working together making samples at a Halloween costume shop, Wise and Wince decided to start their own business.

"We were making clothes for ourselves and we did screenprinting in a class. We had the idea to make clothes for other people after getting a lot of compliments on things we had made," remembers Wise.

The pair also had an affinity for vintage clothes, but wanted to make it "more modern" and accessible for everyday use. "How many dresses can you find in the store—even if you had an unlimited budget—that still look nice and original but you would want to wear to work? We are driven to

do stuff because of the lack of it," says Wise.

Coupled with their quest for easy-going clothes is an artistic vision of melding pretty clothing with darker images.

"I like taking the '50s element of the housewife who looks perfect, then putting a silkscreen over it of people fighting, stabbing and blood. Bringing the two ideas together—I think that women still struggle with that. I know I do," Wince says.

The Blood and Guts summer line which includes button-down shirts emblazoned with drawings of floating priest heads. The inspiration for such dark imagery arose from Wince's fascination with the Catholic Church controversies of recent years.

"I hear about the horri-

ble things that happen and I can't just turn away and not think about them," she declares. "I need to do something with that energy because otherwise I don't want to leave the house. It really can eat you up inside. Our work is a way

to channel that and make something positive, that people are going to put on, feel good and enjoy looking at."

—Leilani Clark

Contact info and to order clothing:
www.houseofbloodandguts.com

Dialing up the revolution.

TRAILBLAZING ACTIVIST DAVID DELLINGER, RIP.

In 1945, having just served two long jail terms for his refusal to be drafted into World War II and furious over the atom bombing of Japan, David Dellinger declared war against the United States.

"The prejudices of patriotism, the pressures of our friends, and the fear of unpopularity, imprisonment, or death should not hold us back any longer," he wrote at

the time. "It must be total war against the infamous economic, political, and social system which has been destroying human life in peace and in war, at home and abroad, for decades.

"Henceforth," he insisted, "no decent citizen owes one scrap of allegiance (if he ever did) to American law, American custom, or American institutions."

So why'd you start Aesthetics?

I was a music director at my college radio station. I became more and more knowledgeable of labels and various genres, so I started to ask labels questions: how they started, who you use to ship your records, how you make a CD, that kind of stuff. People like Kurt [Kellison] who runs Atavistic has been giving me information for years.

How did you know you wanted to start a label?

The arts in this country are underrepresented. With Aesthetics, I try to do it with a little more of an artistic approach to counter the whole mass-production mentality. I'm a fan of things that are not well distributed or released, so that's an underlying concept to the label. It's kind of a weird paradox too, because I don't run Aesthetics to generate money.

So then how do you balance the artistic aspect of the label with the business side, especially in America where it is such a paradox to be an artist and still make a living wage?

[Laughs] I'm not getting wealthy off doing this, I'm still trying to figure it out. The last year, I had two records come out, one by The Eternals and one by KPT.Michigan.

Starting a label in '95 was worlds different than starting a label now. Obviously you have more releases and you appear to be successful, but

how different is it operating an independent label then and now?

The largest general underlying theme is uncertainty. In the past there were more stores, and records sold better in general. There was no burning of CDs and the Internet was increasing to a global scale. I had to call all my distributors because we couldn't afford e-mail. The Internet has changed so much. Whereas before you had to go crate-digging, now you can pretty much get whatever you want in two clicks. That's dramatically changed the whole idea of buying music. ¶ But I think a huge musical recession has resulted from the global economic situation. We are in a way, and it's impacting the economy. We don't have jobs. There is a presidential election coming up. Who knows what'll happen in the next four years if Bush gets elected again.

Tell me about the politics with which you operate your label? Didn't you do some sort of political advertising?

Right before the war started, I did an ad that said something like, "We just wanna say 'fuck you' to the United States for bombing the innocent people of Iraq." And a couple people e-mailed me, saying things like, "How dare you, you traitor, you should be hung." ¶ There's always been an underlying political theme behind Aesthetics. I'm basically trying to be a little more vocal. You know, this is me. —Julianne Shepard

For more info on the Aesthetics label, drop by their website at www.aesthetics-usa.com

It would be, he said, a war for "total brotherhood."

And it would be a nonviolent war: "The acts we perform must be the responsible acts of free men, not the irresponsible acts of conscripts under orders. We must fight against institutions but not against people."

David Dellinger was dialing up the revolution.

I met David a half-century later. I was 19 and had seen him speak and wrote to request an interview with him for a newsletter. Weeks passed with no response. Then finally a letter: He was sorry he had not replied sooner, but there had been a speaking tour and also a protest and an arrest. He had spent a little time in jail. He was 79.

When we finally met, I asked him how many times he had been arrested. David was-

n't keeping track, he told me, it wasn't a race.

David's obituary made most every major American newspaper—NPR and CNN too—when he died in June at Montpelier, Vermont's Heaton Woods assisted living community. He was 88.

But the man honored was a man frozen in time and place: Chicago, 1968. He was, of course, one of the eight—later, seven—on trial for "conspiracy to incite riot" at the 1968 National Democratic Convention.

It was during the trial that David became a bit of a celebrity. He was adored and despised. And so, not surprisingly, it was the celebrity who was eulogized in the mainstream press: "David Dellinger, One of the Chicago Seven, Dies."

There was little trace of the profoundly humble man who, in his 1993 autobiography *From Yale to Jail* struck out against hero worship.

"It's not only words like 'fag,' [or] 'nigger' that demean people by turning them into something less than themselves," he wrote. "Good labels are bad for human beings, too. There is no way I can label you or you can label me without our missing each other."

Dellinger struggled at every turn to shed the "good labels," but the effort was futile; much as he would fight it, he was exceptional.

"David represented the idea that nonviolence, not merely as a refusal to be violent but as a process, could bring about fundamental social change," historian and activist Staughton Lynd, a longtime

friend of David's, remembers. "I don't think he varied in that regard from the late '30s until the day of his death.

"I remember his saying to me 40 years ago that we had both lived beyond the average life expectancy of people in the world as a whole, so these were years that we didn't have a right to expect. We ought to try to do something useful with them."

Dellinger did his best. At Yale in the mid-1930s, David, the son of an influential New England lawyer, put on his oldest clothes, left the security of his college campus, and began a brief but deeply influential stint as a hobo. At Oxford later in the decade, he visited Germany and ferreted out messages from one anti-Nazi group to another. Later as a seminary student, he refused a

Get Your War On BY DAVID RES

WHY CAN'T I GET AWAY WITH FUCKING UP AT MY JOB LIKE DONALD RUMSFELD GETS AWAY WITH FUCKING UP AT HIS JOB?



NOTE TO MY EDITOR: It turns out I need more money. You'll have to raise the price of *Punk Planet* to \$79.95 to cover it. Your readers will understand since I'm doing such an awesome job. PS Tell those humanitarian do-gooders to leave my comic alone!!!

clergy-to-be draft exemption and was thrown in jail. He was out in time to refuse to fight after the United States officially entered World War II. That led to jail again, where he engaged in dangerously long hunger strikes to protest prison segregation and mail censorship. Later still he would visit China, Cuba, and North Vietnam (where he negotiated the release of American POWs).

"He was not about to separate himself from revolutionary impulses, whether in Cuba, or Vietnam, or on the streets of Chicago," Lynd says. "That led many in the nonviolence movement to look askance at some of his political alliances."

Just a few months before the invasion of Iraq, I received a holiday letter from David and his less public, but

equally inspiring wife, Elizabeth Peterson.

They were, they said, "comfortably and happily settled, each in our own room, at Heaton Woods.

"David exercises with 20 other residents here. We get three delicious, nutritious meals a day and there are games and many other activities each morning," she wrote.

It was sweet, but also a little bit sad. Caged birds, I thought. But then there was this: "We are still able to go to the local vigils and rallies for Peace and Justice . . . We are also members of a newer group which is the Alliance for Prison Justice."

And so it went until the very end: an old man and still a revolutionary. —Jeff Guntzel ©

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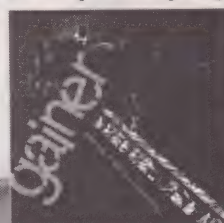
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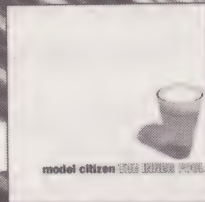
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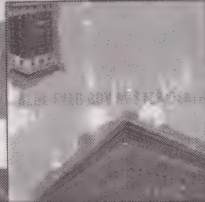
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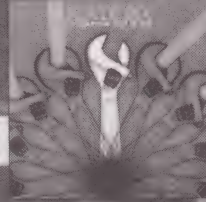


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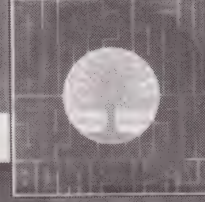
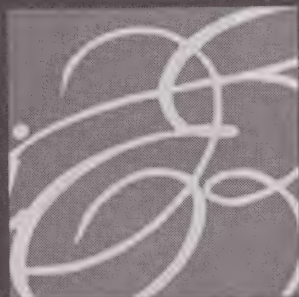


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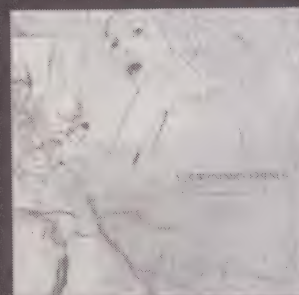
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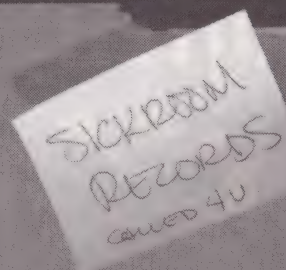
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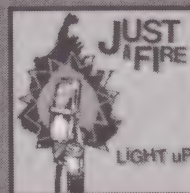
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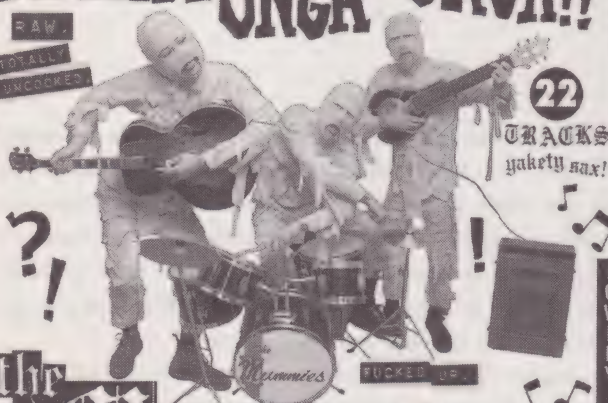
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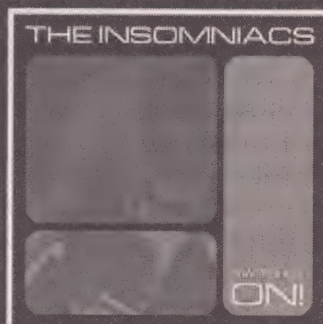
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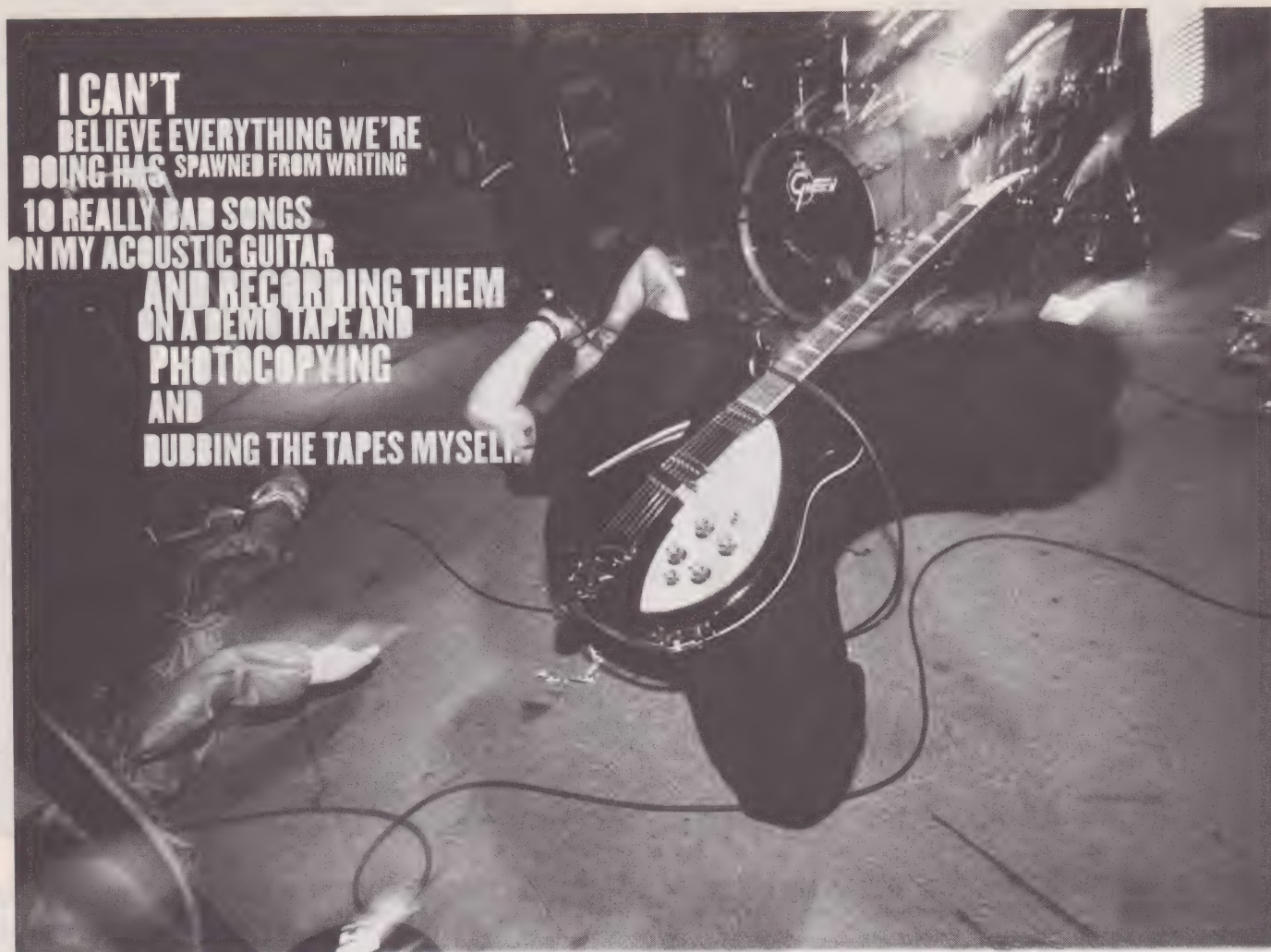


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10 REALLY BAD SONGS
ON MY ACOUSTIC GUITAR
AND RECORDING THEM
ON A DEMO TAPE AND
PHOTOCOPYING
AND
DUBBING THE TAPES MYSELF.**

In an open van alongside a line a block long to get into the evening's sold out show in San Francisco, Tom Gabel sits alongside his bandmates Warren Oakes, James Bowman, and Andrew Seward. Outside, everyone in line is politely trying to mind their own business, but nonetheless cocking an obvious eye to the night's main attraction, who are having their photos taken for this interview.

As Tom and his mates stumbled out of the van, eyes still glazed from the flash of the camera, a young woman whom Tom has never met steps out of the line and asks for a picture with him. Thin, in tight fitting black jeans, black denim jacket, and a black hoodie with wisps of bleach blond hair poking out from under a black beanie, their clothes are nearly identical. A click and a flash and a thanks and she's disappeared back into the line.

"I feel awkward doing things like that," Gabel says a half hour later, sitting in a bar a few blocks away. "I don't want to be a dick and be like, 'No, I'm not going to take a fuckin' photo with you,' but at the same time, it makes me feel like such a jackass. Sitting in the van in front of the venue

with everybody waiting in line, taking pictures for this article—that sucked."

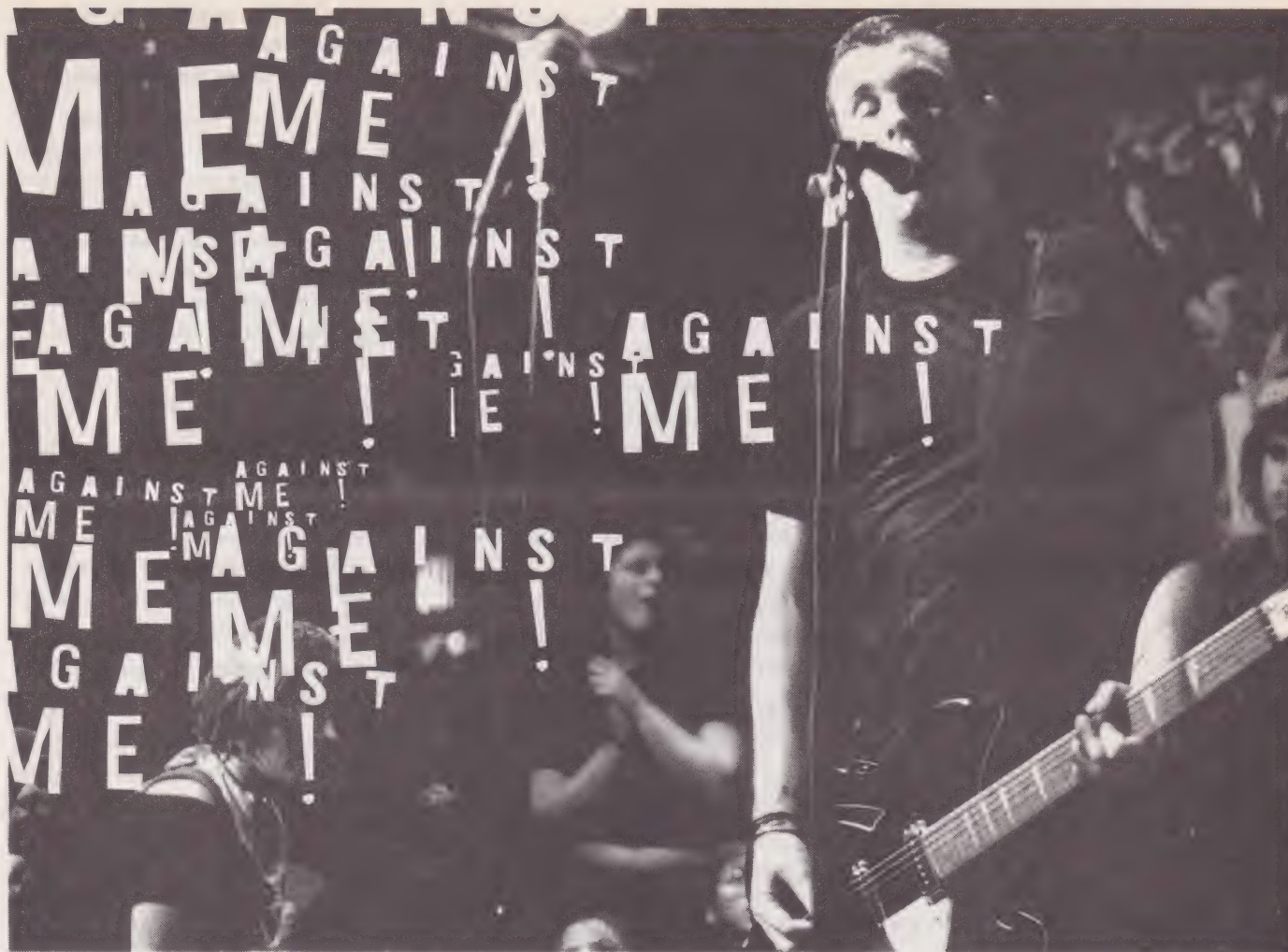
But this isn't Gabel's bedroom anymore and he's not just playing a guitar and singing into a four-track recorder. People are watching—more than he can imagine—and taking awkward pictures with someone he has never met before is one of the many compromises he will make by leaving his bedroom, leaving his local scene, and leaving his town to sing and play to whoever is willing to watch . . . and pay.

I suppose it's awkward, but so must a room packed full of people singing the lyrics you penned about your dead grandparents; so must seeing roughly demoed songs go for hundreds of dollars on Ebay; so must wondering what sort of story you can pen out of every situation, event, and meeting you come across.

I suppose awkward comes with the territory. But comfort? For Gabel, never.

Interview by **George B. Sanchez**

Photos by **Scott MacDonald**



Tonight's sold-out show is a long way from how you started. Take me back to the beginning of Against Me.

In 1997 or so, I played bass in other bands, but I had an acoustic guitar and a four-track at home. I just started messing around on my four-track and I wrote a bunch of songs. In a week's period I put them all on a demo tape as kind of a challenge to myself. The first demo tape was actually horrible.

Is that what people are paying hundreds of dollars on eBay for?

No. There were two demo tapes and then the 12". I started doing that and eventually

a friend of mine, Kevin, started playing drums. We'd just sit in the bedroom of my mom's house and play music for hours on end. We recorded a demo tape shortly after that. Four months later, we were like, "Fuck it, lets do a tour." We went on tour with just the demo tape.

Just the two of you?

Yeah, the two of us. After that, we moved to Gainesville and we did another tour for the 12". It was like two months long and we played 13 shows in two months—it was ridiculous! We did it in a '76 Buick. We tore out the back bench and made a little nook for someone to sit. It was literally two months long with 13 shows, so we'd have long

periods without shows. We'd go camp in the woods in Montana for a week; we slept on the beach outside of Santa Cruz for a week.

So you just wandered for a while, almost like a troubadour.

We didn't really have any intentions of what we were going to do with it, it just kind of happened. I can't believe everything we're doing has spawned from writing 10 really bad songs on my acoustic guitar and recording them on a demo tape and photocopying and dubbing the tapes myself. But people have come and gone—Kevin, the original drummer has come and gone; Warren is now playing... Dustin, who used to play bass, is gone too.

The band also moved from acoustic to electric and back. What prompted those changes?

It was a gradual thing. At first when we started touring, like I said, we toured in a Buick LeSabre so obviously we had really small amplifiers in order to fit into the car. I had my acoustic, James has always played electric, and Dustin played acoustic bass for a while. The more and more amplified we got, the more and more problems we had with feedback. People seem to have this idea that we're an acoustic band, but it's still an acoustic guitar that has a pickup in it; it's plugged in to an amp, you know? It's not really acoustic.

Does it surprise you that you guys have taken off the way you have?

Totally. But at the same time, it has been a gradual thing. You might not be able to perceive it as that from an outside perspective, but for us in the band touring since '97, each tour has gotten significantly better every time. It hasn't been like first we were this band playing in a bedroom in my mom's house and we do our first tour and all of a sudden we're selling out Gilman. It was a gradual thing.

As the band has grown, I'm sure you've had to make compromises along the way. Is there any fundamental stuff you've grown tired of?

Honestly, if I had my way, I would make every record we have come in a black sleeve, really and there would be no song titles. For me, I enjoy writing songs, I enjoy playing them, I enjoy touring. I really hate coming up with artwork, designing T-shirts, and crap like that. I don't like any of that aspect of it. I don't like naming the songs. It's such a side note. It's only because you have to do it: you have to have some artwork for your fucking record and you have to have a T-shirt when you go on tour to sell, otherwise you're going to starve. It's just the way it is.

Also as you grow, more people seem to feel the need to complain about that growth. For instance, I keep hearing that the new record is "too clean."

We recorded completely analog. We did it the most old-school, traditional way you can do a record. We didn't do any doubling

up of guitar tracks, didn't do any effects that most bands do with Pro-Tools and shit. We just did the most organic recording process possible. The studio was awesome; the equipment that was used was awesome. I think it sounds really good. [¶] The stigma that people have with recording qualities I think is weird. I think that if you're working with what you've got and you record something and maybe it doesn't sound so great, that's fine. Many of my favorite bands didn't have the best recording quality and I can listen to those records and they mean so much to me and it sounds awesome. But if you're striving to sound like shit and you're striving to sound poorly recorded, I think that's really pretentious. No musician who is spending their time wants to sound like crap.

That complaint tends to come from folks outside of the creative process. As a writer, I don't want to write the same way I did 10 years ago. I'd hope that my writing gets cleaner and gets stronger.

And as a magazine, you'd hope that your magazine looks better. You work with what you've got and if you don't got a lot, that doesn't mean you can't do something amazing. But you shouldn't strive to have something that's poorly done.

As the band has progressed, your song writing has grown as well. Is there a fine line you walk as a writer, that no matter what, your life will come through in your art?

I don't know. I mean, I can't write fictional things. I can't just make up scenarios and write songs out of that, so sometimes you're sitting there trying to write a song and you have that in your mind and you almost . . . I start to feel like a vampire in some ways.

What do you mean?

Like maybe I'm getting into relationships in my life, with my friends, or whatever, in order to have a situation to write about. Like I'm looking for a conflict or I'm looking for something to inspire writing. It's almost twisted and I get really worried about it in a lot of ways. Is that fucked up?

No, I think that's a good question. As a writer and a journalist, that's always an issue for me. At a certain point everything becomes fodder

for stories and you wonder if it's right. It's interesting to hear you say you're almost searching for situations that will inspire.

Before, it was like things happened and then you wrote about them to deal with them. Now it's like you *need* to write and you're almost seeking out that conflict, because it gets harder and harder to find. Being a band that's on tour constantly has made my relationships and interactions with people—besides the people in my band—few and far between, so it's weird.

How is that affecting your writing?

In some ways, it makes you more disciplined. I enjoy writing and it makes me be like "I want to write X amount of hours a day." But I can't write songs about being on tour all the time. That's really fucking boring and no one wants to hear about it—besides, Bob Seger already did it.

How disciplined are you? Do you have an hour set aside every day to write?

I try to write at least an hour a day. I always have a notebook in the van, in my bag, or wherever. I try to do it sometimes before I go to bed or sometimes in the morning, because I want to stay in practice. I used to go about it like, "I'm going to write something and I'm going to sit down and this has to be the best thing ever, I have to write the most amazing thing in the world right now." But I've come to terms that I can write something and I don't have to use it.

Do the other guys contribute to the songwriting?

Musically, yes, but not as far as lyrically.

Because you're the primary songwriter and because the band originated with you and an acoustic guitar in a bedroom, is there a certain fear that all the attention is going to you as opposed to the band as a whole?

To a certain extent, it's something you think about, especially since we're doing more and more interviews. But nobody's jealous of anything and no one is fighting over who gets to do it.

So it's not an issue with you guys?

No it's not an issue.

Tonight, seeing fans hitting you up for photographs outside the club, was that weird?



HONESTLY,
IF I HAD MY WAY, I WOULD MAKE EVERY
RECORD WE HAVE COME IN A BLACK SLEEVE,
REALLY AND THERE WOULD BE NO SONG TITLES.
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I ENJOY PLAYING THEM, I ENJOY
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WITH ARTWORK, DESIGNING
T-SHIRTS, AND CRAVING LIKE THAT.

Yeah, it's weird. I feel awkward doing things like that. I don't want to be a dick and be like, "No, I'm not going to take a fuckin' photo with you," but at the same time, it makes me feel like such a jackass. Sitting in the van in front of the venue with everybody waiting in line, taking pictures for this article—that sucked. I don't like doing that. I feel like a jackass.

I have to imagine that's part of the business that sucks for you guys.

Yeah.

But what we're doing right now, this interview, is part of the business too.

But this is cool, I mean, I like you. This has been fun. Some interviews have been horrible. Some interviews can be so

absolutely mind-numbingly boring. We actually did an interview not too long ago where someone asked us if there was one thing around the world you could change, what would it be. I was like, "Christ, is this a Miss America contest?"

At a certain point, do you feel conscious about doing things or saying things publicly? Not in front of a reporter per se, but with that whole line of kids . . .

It challenges you to stay focused as a band on your aesthetic or whatever you're going for and not get lost as to what the hell you're doing there. It makes you really try to consciously remember every day, why you're playing music, and why you're in a band, what you're doing it for

and what you get out of it.

Have you found the answers to any of those questions yourself?

Why do I do it? What do I get out of it? I get enjoyment out of it. It's amazing. Why do I do it? Playing music and writing music is cathartic, it's a release, and it's an amazing time. A lot of what I always thought punk rock was supposed to be about is that you can do something amazing with your life. You know, fuck working a shit job. Fuck what everybody tells you that you have to do with your life. Go out and do something really amazing—the sky's the limit. For me, I'm 23 and I'm traveling around the country, around the world, playing music with my best friends and it's amazing. ©

POST PUNK KITCHEN

Are you a bad cook? Do you like cooking shows, but want to tell the celebrity chef cooking lamb shanks in their \$50,000, eternally well-stocked, sound-stage kitchens to take a hike? Do you need to give your eating habits a little kick in the rump roast? Are you running out of ideas on how to dress up your tofu?

If you answered, "yes" to any of these questions, then Isa Chandra's cable access show *The Post Punk Kitchen* is for you. Give this native Brooklynite just 30 minutes and from the reasonably stocked, modestly equipped, unpretentious comfort of her very own home, Isa and her co-host Terry will share with you the secrets of their mind-blowing vegan cuisine.

I can hear the snickers of carnivores rippling through the cosmos: *Mind-blowing vegan cuisine? This girl's got tofu for brains!* But hear me out. In the first three episodes of the *PPK*, this dynamic duo make crepes filled with curried sweet potatoes and drizzled with a creamy tamarind cashew sauce, chocolate and orange cupcakes, and the best vegan matzoh ball soup you will ever eat.

According to Isa, she's not trying to push an agenda or transform carnivores into herbivores, it's just that food and cooking have been significant in her development and life ever since she decided to become vegan. Whether she was doing Food Not Bombs in Tompkins

Square Park in the punk days of her teen years or holding potlucks for her anarcho-feminist collective while waiting ridiculous amounts of tables to pay the rising cost of New York City rent, food was at the center of her world. In a way, the self-sufficient, DIY approach that she used to get the show up and running has taken her full circle. The result is an excellent, quirky, informative program with a soundtrack that no punk—or post punk—can resist.

Interview by **Cate Levinson**

Photographs by **Jen Knee**

When did you come up with the idea for the *Post Punk Kitchen*?

My friends open a cafe and I did a lot of the cooking. When I cooked, I was always talking to myself—as quietly as possible—as if I was on a cooking show. And I've always liked doing video projects, but I hadn't really done them since I was a teenager. My friends and I were always talking about making our own TV shows, so when I found that I had a lot of free time, I decided to make it happen.

Is it your mission with the show to spread vegetarianism?

At this point, I don't want to ever say "don't

eat meat" on the show. I didn't say, "I want to do a vegetarian cooking show," but it's what I am and it's what I cook, so I couldn't do it any other way. On the other hand, I think the cooking show idea stuck in my mind because there really aren't any good vegetarian cooking shows, so it's something I wanted to do for all the vegetarians out there. It was less a reaction to meat eating and more about giving something to vegetarians.

Why did you go vegetarian?

It was a combination of things. At first it was that I couldn't stand to think of how animals were being treated, and I couldn't stand thinking of something like that happening to my cat. When I was about 12 I started to try being a vegetarian, but it was hard because I had to eat whatever was around, either at school or what my mom bought. When I was about 15, I started learning more about it. I compared it to other oppressive things that were going on all over the world, and food seemed like a good place to start because it's easy to have control over it, to do your part. When I got into the punk scene, a lot of the people I hung out with were vegetarian.

Where did you grow up?

Sheep's Head Bay, Brooklyn.

When did you start hanging out in the punk scene? Was that a Brooklyn thing? Or were



you going into Manhattan?

Well we had a makeshift punk scene in Sheep's Head Bay, but when I was about 13 or 14, I started going to the Lower East Side and hanging out there.

Is that when you started getting involved politically?

My main focus as a teenager was working with the Anarchist Youth Federation. It was pretty all-encompassing. I wound up dropping out of high school and creating anarchy in my teenage years.

How old were you then?

Sixteen. I was working on the squats on the Lower East Side. Back then there was still a question as to whether or not the neighborhood was going to be gentrified. Obviously, the answer to that question was "yes," but back then every day there was a demo; there were riots practically every weekend. Squats opened and got shut down all the time. I focused most of my attention on that.

Did you end up going back to school?

No I didn't; I took a different path. From 21 to 23, I was just on drugs and really messed up. After that, I never went back to school. I waited tables for a while and then I taught myself website stuff. That's what I do now.

Where were you living?

I wasn't really living anywhere. I had a room in a squat, but I usually wasn't staying in it. At the time there were a lot of drugs in the building that I was in and a woman got raped, so I didn't stay there at night. I was still sort of living at home with my mom in Brooklyn and staying all over the place.

When you were living in the squats, did you cook?

Yeah, Food Not Bombs was something we did every weekend in Tompkins Square Park. That was when food took on a new meaning for me. The Food Not Bombs food always tasted like shit, so for me that was a huge incentive to learn to cook well.

That must have been frustrating.

To feed homeless people crappy food? Yeah, it sucked. On top of that, back then there was some guy who killed his girlfriend, chopped her up, cooked her and was serving her to people in the park.

Wait a minute, what?!

True story. It got me thinking that we needed to work a little harder on making better food. That sounds terrible! We weren't like, "I don't want people to suspect they were eating dead girlfriends, so let's improve the quality of the food." It just gives you an idea of the kind of food people were eating and

just how tough things were.

That's one of the most horrible stories I've ever heard.

Well aside from dead girlfriends, the food that people could get was pretty bad. We would get whatever we could, but sometimes it was just, like, broccoli and water. It just wasn't fair to people. Then there was this big gap when the park got shut down, and it was hard for us to get our bearings because the park had been this center for people to meet. The people I knew began to lose touch with each other.

How did you deal with that?

Well, I left New York for a while. I tried to move to San Francisco and I did some Food Not Bombs stuff out there, but I began to feel really lonely there. I couldn't make connections out there, which at the time I blamed on San Francisco, but it could have been me. I moved back home and lived in a squat, but it was really sad to live here with the park closed. So many of the people I knew, and had gone through so many experiences with, had either moved away, become junkies, or they hated what the neighborhood had become. It wasn't the same at all, so I just decided to do drugs and nothing else for two years.

Heroin?

Yeah. It was like 1994 and everything past Houston was basically a heroin shopping mall. I moved into an apartment over there and it was *everywhere*; there were heroin dealers on my steps, and you couldn't walk 10 feet without getting offered some. I guess you could say I had an adventurous spirit, so I tried it. It was so available and I was so depressed. I felt like my options were to sit around and be depressed or go do some heroin. When that happened, everything else went out the window as far as ideals were concerned. It was like nothing else mattered anymore.

When you look back, how do you see that period of your life?

It's hard for me to figure out how that could have happened. Most people would never have expected me to go down that road. I consider it two years of my life that were pretty much wasted.

Why was it surprising that you fell into that?

It was really humbling because I thought I had it all together. I suppose you could say I was fairly self-righteous. I had seen plenty of people go that route, and I had always hated when there were junkies in the squats, or when junkies would fuck something up for everyone else. I never even considered the possibility that I could end up like that.

Do you think that part of it had to do with being in the same neighborhood and that the networks and people that gave you day to day meaning before were gone?

Definitely. When I discovered punk rock and anarchy, I was pretty naïve. I was *truly* convinced that in five years everyone in the world would be punk rock vegetarians. I didn't think the Lower East Side was going to go the way it did; I thought the people would win. Every step along the way was a major blow to me. I didn't think the curfew in the park would be instated, I thought we'd get our buildings and we would get to have our community. I thought that the

revolution would come and fulfill this vision I had. It seemed so real to me, I could practically taste it. So when I realized that it wasn't going to happen, that we had really lost, I hadn't prepared for that. I hadn't gone to school, I didn't know what my life was going to be about after that; I didn't know what to do with myself. I look back at it now and I realize that I had spent all those years being political and not dealing with *myself*. So when I didn't have the politics anymore, I realized I didn't have anything.

Do you mean that the politics served as a substitute emotional development.

Yeah. I don't know what other people do during those years. I guess they're learning how to get a job and figuring out what they want to be when they grow up. I skipped that part.

How did your family deal with all this? Were you in touch with them?

I was for a while, but after about six months I avoided them. At that point I was literally homeless and sleeping in parks, or wherever I could find. It was hard then to even stay in the squats because they thought you'd steal something if you were a junkie, which is understandable. ¶ One day it seemed like it was going to be a normal day for me as a junkie, but I just lost it, got hysterical, and called my mom. I went to rehab, which was supposed to be a year long program, but I didn't stay much longer than a month. After that it took a series of small steps to get my shit together. At that point I was only about 23. I went away to Minneapolis for a while to see friends, because my friends who lived far away still liked me. Even if I could spend time with my friends who could forgive me, so much of the problem was that I felt so guilty. Even when I hadn't done something horrible to someone, I still felt like apologizing to them.

When you came back from Minneapolis, were you ready to start getting your shit together?

Yeah. I started waiting tables and working to pay rent. I didn't get back into politics at that point because it felt hypocritical all the time. The whole drug thing made me feel like I had thrown away everything, any community that I had helped to build. My whole path was just *obliterated*.

Do you think you felt that way because you had been so confident when you were an activist, so sure of your future, and it hadn't come to fruition?

As a kid, I had always been a little lost. I think a lot of kids who are punk feel that way. I didn't fit in; I thought I could never be happy. When I found punk, it became my whole identity and it was *amazing*. So I felt like I had to go back to square one because I had destroyed everything I had cared about. I felt like I didn't fit in again. I felt shitty about myself.

It must have taken a lot to rebuild your confidence.

It still is! I still feel shitty about myself, but I don't feel guilty in the same way. I know some people go into recovery and they become very 12-steppy—which is fine for some, but that's not what I needed. At that point, any real friends I had made still stayed with me and my family stuck by me, and I made some new friends. Slowly I started slinking back into society.

So your family was supportive?

I think it was hard for my mom because I had stolen her credit cards. It took a long time to gain her trust back, but we're OK now.

So what took the place of rehab meetings for you?

The idea of going back was just so horrifying to me, and that's what made me stay clean. I know that's not enough for a lot of people, but it scared me straight.

So when did you start thinking about what you might want to do with your future?

I wanted to be a writer. I would constantly write short stories. I made a zine called *I Blame Society* while I was waiting tables. I'd always find time to write because it made me feel human. Also, I was working in Soho and I started to learn a lot more about gourmet food. Even though it wasn't vegetarian, I figured out how to apply it to vegetarian cooking. I'd see sesame crusted salmon and I'd say to myself, "I wonder if I could do that with tofu." Food has just been the most important thing to me all throughout my life. Through all the experiences I've had, even heroin, it was important to me. ☺



From Isa's Kitchen

We asked Post-Punk Kitchen's Isa Chandra to cook us up something good. Here's what she came up with.

Chili Verde

Green chili is a nice change to the same old same old. If you've never used tomatillos before be prepared for a delicious (and adorable) discovery. You'll need a blender for this, so run over to your moms' and get one. Serves 4.

- 1 medium white onion, roughly chopped
- 2 Anaheim chilies, seeded and chopped (use one to make it milder)
- 15 average-sized tomatillos chopped, (skins removed)
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup dry white wine (optional, you can use vegetable broth)
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 1 cup cilantro, loosely packed
- 2 poblanos peppers, roasted* and chopped
- 1 cup red potatoes, diced small
- 15 oz can pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 lime
- 1 teaspoon sugar (optional)
- red onion to garnish

Spice blend

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- fresh black pepper

In a medium sized pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onions and saute until translucent (about 5 minutes). Add garlic, chiles and spice blend. Saute until the garlic is fragrant (1-2 minutes). Add tomatillos and saute until they begin to release moisture (about 5 minutes). Add wine and vegetable broth and cover. Bring to a low boil. Lower heat and boil for 20 minutes.

Remove cover and let chili cool just until it stops steaming. Pour into a blender and give it about five 3 second pulses to puree. It should still be chunky (remove the top in between pulses if it's still steaming to avoid a steam explosion). Taste the chili and if it's a little bitter add sugar. If not then just proceed (sometimes tomatillos are bitter, sometimes not, sugar counteracts bitterness).

Return it to the pot and add the potatoes, poblanos and beans. Bring to a low boil and boil 20 to 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are tender. Tear the cilantro into pieces and add. Squeeze some lime juice in if you like. Serve with guacamole and cornbread and it wouldn't hurt to garnish each serving with a little finely chopped onion and slices of lime.

*To roast the poblanos, remove the tops and seeds, coat them with a little oil and place them in the broiler for about 7 minutes on each side, skin should be charred. Remove them from the oven and place in a paper bag. In about 1/2 hour, the skin should be steamed and will peel off easily. You can do this while the chili is cooking. ©

**I HAD SPENT ALL THOSE YEARS
BEING POLITICAL AND NOT DEALING
WITH MYSELF. SO WHEN I DIDN'T
HAVE THE POLITICS ANYMORE, I
REALIZED I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING.**

Luis Alberto Urrea grew up in a home where tug-o-war was not a picnic game, it was an ongoing parental dispute over his cultural identity. The son of a Mexican father who spoke to him only in Spanish and an American mother who insisted the proper pronunciation of his name was "Lewis," Urrea felt torn between two worlds: his birthplace, Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego, California. Although each parent tried to impress their particular nationality on him, Urrea knew he'd never be able to make a choice. Urrea once wrote, "the border runs down the middle of me. I have a barbed-wire fence neatly bisecting my heart."

Now grown, Urrea has written several books in which he explores life on both sides of the Mexican-American Border, including *Across the Wire* and *By the Lake of Sleeping Children*. In his latest book, *The Devil's Highway*, he tells the horrible tale of the "Yuma 14," a group of would-be illegal immigrants from Mexico—known as *walkers*—who died in the Arizona desert in May of 2001 during a failed attempt to enter the United States on foot.

I sat down and had a sprawling talk with Urrea about the border, the walkers, the cops, and the hope—or lack thereof—of change.

Interview by Massimiliano Adelmo Giorgini

In *The Devil's Highway*, you investigate the deaths of the immigrants from many different angles: the survivors, the Mexican Consul, the coyotes—human smugglers—and even the Border Patrol. It's a very multi-faceted approach to a multi-faceted problem. How did you come to that?

When I started the book, I was already on the side of the illegal aliens because I understand that side of the struggle, but I had no idea what the lives of the smugglers are like. Plus, I was brought up thinking the men who work on the Border Patrols—the *Migra*—are fascist jack-booted thugs; I always thought they were the enemy. I had no clue what it was like to live that world. ¶ My initial plan was to attack the Border Patrol. I

went into what I thought was the belly of the beast, the Border Patrol Station, knowing I would

catch them in the act and assuming I knew their whole story. Of course they were using some terms like *tonks*, which is a nickname they use for Mexicans—it's an onomatopoeia: it refers to sound of a flashlight cracking over their heads. They thought it was funny until I said "I know what that means, you bastards." They looked at me as if they were little boys who got busted looking at porn. It was a very weird scene. But suddenly I realized it was like hanging out with a group of Boy Scouts. I think you have similar situations on a construction site or at a fire department. They were just working class guys hanging out on the job. ¶ When I realized that, it was as if my eyes opened for the first time. I realized this is a story about three groups of people who are brought together in completely shitty circumstances. These guys are not coming from the privileged elite. None of them are white-collar guys. Mexicans, coyotes, and cops are from the same social class in their particular culture. When they meet, they're all trapped in this dangerous, geopolitical game on this barren landscape.

That's one of the surprising elements in your book. You rarely hear about Border Patrol agents showing compassion in these situations. The stereotype is that they hate the illegal immigrants, and would just as soon see them die. Was there any evidence of this?

They don't want them to die, they really don't. One of the Border Patrol guys said to me, "Look, I know by the nature of the fact that they're here that they're not only willing to break the laws of my country, but they've already done it. So the people I am looking for are *already* criminals. But they don't deserve a death sentence for the crime. If a guy sneaks into my orchard to steal an apple, I don't kill him. If I were in his situation, I'd be here too." ¶ There's no question, there are many incidents in which agents abuse their authority. I know about a lot of really evil Border Patrol stories. I know that Border Patrol guys have shot innocent people, and molested women. But they're also in a situation like Vietnam, where the stresses and mania and the pressures are extreme, to say the least. These guys know what it feels like to find a

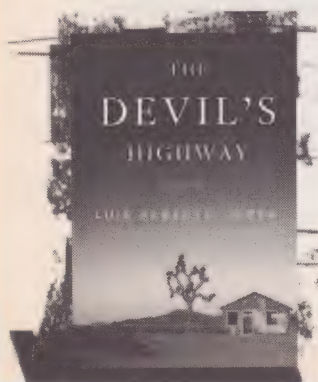
19-year-old mother dead with a living infant still sucking on her drying nipple trying to get milk. They know what it feels like to find a pregnant woman who's been abandoned to die and you can see her stomach still moving as the fetus dies inside her. They know how it feels to carry dead children. They take it really hard. There is a lot of despair from the human cost.

Given the estimate of over five million successful walkers per year, it seems incredible that there have not been more tragedies on the scale of the Yuma 14. How many more incidents of this nature do you think actually go undiscovered?

They happen all the time. The policy is if they find a dead body, unless there's straight-up ID, they leave it. They don't even register them. There are hundreds of them out there. They find people who were left for dead along every mile of Interstate 8 going east from San Diego. ¶ The Mexican Consul in Tucson said to me, "The only reason you people are interested in this one incident is because so many people died, but the same exact tragedy happens every day." Just this morning they found 160 illegals locked in one room in a house in Phoenix. Men, women, and children—locked in with padlocks.

In the book, you refer to US-based vigilante groups along the border. How serious a problem are these groups and how strong are their numbers?

They're out there. Nobody knows who's doing it, but the evidence is there. They find people tied up and shot, their bodies left to rot under the hot desert sun. I know that there were these guys in Tucson who had a barbeque and they were shooting into groups of walkers with a hunting rifle, just for kicks. That's a level of hatred and inhumanity that's truly frightening. But that's the message that gets drummed into our heads: these are bad people who are invading our country and taking away our way of life. They sneak in and steal "our" jobs; they're "browning" America. It's an endless propaganda war. ¶ If we are to blame anyone it should be the people who designed NAFTA. NAFTA was designed to seek out the cheapest labor, which at the time was South of the US border. They





ALBERTO URREA

MEXICANS, COYOTES, AND COPS ARE FROM THE SAME SOCIAL CLASS IN THEIR PARTICULAR CULTURE. WHEN THEY MEET, THEY'RE ALL TRAPPED IN THIS DANGEROUS, GEOPOLITICAL GAME ON THIS BARREN LANDSCAPE.



I'LL NEVER FORGET THE MOMENT WHEN ONE PATROLMAN TOLD ME "THE ENEMY IS MY OWN GOVERNMENT." CAN YOU IMAGINE BEING THAT GUY? HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH A JOB THAT PUTS YOU IN THAT POSITION EVERY DAY?

built all of those great factories that were going to transform the Mexican economy, but things have changed. Already more than 500 factories have been shut down, leaving millions of people with no work and no prospects. Now the cheapest labor available is in China, so that's where all the jobs went. ¶ And let's not forget our part in this: these guys make it possible for us to have cheap food; they help all sorts of business—ranging from large to small—make bigger profits. Greed makes for poor logic; we want cheap labor because we want low prices, but we don't want to work as cheap labor.

By the end of the book, one gets the sense that the blame for the tragedy lays in the governments of both the United States and Mexico. What changes in their policies do you feel would help to prevent this kind of tragedy?

I think both governments are culpable in the situation; however, I believe the bulk of the blame falls on the US. One of the Mexican politicians I interviewed told me that Mexico owes 80 cents of every dollar earned to foreign debt, and most of it is owed to the United States. At the end of the day there's nothing left over, so it's impossible to get ahead. He said to me, "If I don't have products to sell to you, the only thing left for me to do is to sell the labor to you, because there's no other way for the people to make a living." Straight up: if there were no jobs here, they wouldn't come. ¶ I think the deepest thing we can do to help people is to try to address the situation between the governments. Take a look at industry, take a look at corruption, take a look at the money flow, and all that sort of thing. America doesn't

want to forgive Mexico's foreign debt because we'll lose however many billion dollars that we, in some fantasy, will get from them some day. Maybe if we forgive Mexico's foreign debt, we'd get on the right foot. That could be one solution.

The walkers you describe are willing to risk death in the hopes of a better tomorrow for their families. Isn't this essentially the same ethic of the American pioneer?

[Laughs] Yeah. Well, it depends on who you ask. The thing that's happening right now is the ultimate DIY event, isn't it? "My life is not working. I can't feed my children. I'm going to go and subject myself to the worst fucking experience on earth, then scrub white people's shit out of a toilet, or fry a hamburger for them, or cut the heads off chickens for them, so that I can feed my children." In their minds, they don't understand why we see it as invasion and subversion. They think they're coming to help the United States. They're coming to do the shit we won't do for ourselves. And let's face it: we won't. ¶ The US Government has estimated that each adult illegal costs us about \$50,000 over a lifetime. But you've gotta calculate other things, for example, the withholding tax taken from their paychecks—there are several million illegals and they will never get a return. That money just vanishes out of their paycheck. Where does it go? Social Security? FICA? State tax? It adds up to millions of dollars. And then you have to consider their spending power. What do the immigrants do with their money? They send a percentage of that money home to Mexico, but you don't send all of it, even to your most dear loved ones. That means that all

the rest of that money, after taxes and after remittance to Mexico, is going back into our economy, right? Everything they buy they pay sales tax on. You have to take a closer look at the statistics because they leave out a lot of information. ¶ The big capitalist powerbrokers know that the illegals' presence lowers the minimum wage. It makes their profit margin bigger so that their product is cheaper. Somebody is benefiting big time, or it would be stopped. If the US really wanted it stopped, it would be stopped. ¶ The Border Patrol is ordered sometimes to let people by. I saw a letter from the main office in DC telling them to just stop operations for a week because there weren't enough workers in California to pick vegetables. They just had to sit and let them go by. If one of the Border Patrol agents trusts you enough, they tell you what they really think. I'll never forget the moment when one patrolman told me "the enemy is my own government." Can you imagine being that guy? How do you deal with a job that puts you in that position every day? ¶ There's a joke along the border that says they're going to build a fence all the way across like the Great Wall of China. The Mexicans always say, "Let them build it, because they're going to hire us as the contractors to put it up! Then, once it's up we can charge people money to climb to the top and look over it. Then, when the US finally gets sick of it, they'll pay us to tear it back down again!" ¶ There's always hope and there's always humor, but it's really hard to find a way to keep your spirits up. If they put a picture next to the definition of hopeless, it would be a photo of the border. ©

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ZERO STREET Lincoln

New Jersey

CURMUDGEON MUSIC Edison
TOILET WATER Ocean City

New Mexico

NEWSLAND Albuquerque

New York

GENERATION RECORDS NYC
MONDO KIM'S NYC
WOWSVILLE NYC
LAZYITIS RECORDS Red Hook

North Carolina

GREEN EGGS AND JAM Ashville
CD ALLEY Chapel Hill
INTERNATIONALIST BOOKS Chapel Hill
GATE CITY NOISE Greensboro

Ohio

SQUARE RECORDS Akron
EVERYBODY'S RECORDS Cincinnati
BENT CRAYON Cleveland
MAC'S BACKS PAPERBACKS Cleveland
MAGNOLIA THUNDERPUSSY Columbus
GALAXY CDS Hamilton
CHRIS' WARPED RECORDS Lakewood
GOODDOG MUSIC Lancaster
ULTRASOUND Mentor
MY GENERATION Westlake

Oregon

HOUSE OF RECORDS Eugene
2ND AVENUE RECORDS Portland
GREEN NOISE Portland
MUSIC MILLENNIUM Portland
Q IS FOR CHOIR Portland
READING FRENZY Portland

Pennsylvania

DOUBLE DECKER RECORDS Allentown
REPO RECORDS Bryn Mawr
ANGRY YOUNG AND POOR Lancaster
AKA MUSIC Philadelphia
REPO RECORDS Philadelphia
SPACEBOY RECORDS Philadelphia
BRAVE NEW WORLD Pittsburgh

Rhode Island

ARMAGEDDON SHOP Providence

South Carolina

EMERALD DISCS Camden
52.5 RECORDS Charleston

Tennessee

CD WAREHOUSE Nashville

Texas

SEASICK RECORDS Denton
HOURGLASS RECORDS Houston
SOUND EXCHANGE Houston
VINAL EDGE Houston
RALPH'S RECORDS Lubbock

Vermont

THE CAUSE Burlington

Virginia

COLZAC COMICS Manassas
CAMP ZAMA RECORDS Norfolk
SKINNIES RECORDS Norfolk
PANIC Virginia Beach

Washington

VIVA LA VINYL Bellingham
13TH AVENUE MUSIC Longview
PHANTOM CITY RECORDS Olympia
FALLOUT RECORDS Seattle
LEFT BANK BOOKS Seattle
SINGLES GOING STEADY Seattle
MOTHER RECORDS Tacoma

Washington DC

BRIAN MACKENZIE INFOSHOP
SMASH RECORDS

Wisconsin

DEAF EAR La Crosse
EAR WAX Madison
ATOMIC RECORDS Milwaukee
BEANS & BARLEY Milwaukee

Wyoming

SONIC RAINBOW Casper

Canada

SLOTH RECORDS Calgary
FREECLOUD RECORDS Edmonton
THE BOOKSHELF Guelph
THE JUNGLE Kingston
SPEED CITY RECORDS London
LIBRARIE ALTERNATIVE Montreal
SOUND CENTRAL Montreal
MUDSHARK MEDIA North Bay
SONGBIRD MUSIC Ottawa
VINYL DINER Saskatoon
ST. JAMES STEREO Thunder Bay
ROTATE THIS Toronto
RED CAT RECORDS Vancouver

Germany

FLIGHT 13 RECORDS Freiburg
ELDORADO MUSIC Regensburg

Greece

JINX RECORDS Athens

Italy

RIOT RECORDS Milan

Mexico

INDIE ZONE Guadalajara, Jalisco

Scotland

MONORAIL MUSIC Glasgow

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the WILDHEARTS

When the guys play a really good show and they want to go out and get loaded, that's their business. As for me, I always go home sober.

You've heard it all before: stories about smack benders, onstage fisticuffs, stunts in psyche wards, the trashing hotel rooms and offices, Diazepam prescriptions, and the roaring rivers of alcohol. It's the quintessential rock'n'roll cliché, and it's all part of the Wildhearts' sordid past. Fortunately, after 15 years, the British band seems determined to avoid the dramas of yesteryear and stay focused on the thing that really matters—walls of Marshall stacks, low-slung Les Pauls, and melodies that soar to rapturous heights.

The Wildhearts had it coming for a long time. The band's last US release and tour came with 1993's critically lauded *Earth vs. the Wildhearts*, but drama quickly overtook the London four-piece in a tsunami of dysfunction that left them drained professionally and psychologically. Despite all the turmoil, the band continued to release sonic-gems. They released *P.H.U.Q.* in 1995 and *Fishin' for Luckies* in 1996, neither of which made so much as a blip on the radar in the US because the band lacked distribution on this side of the Atlantic. The band broke up for a time, reformed, and recorded 2003's power pop disk, *The Wildhearts Must Be Destroyed*. The album reunited vocalist Ginger with original guitarist CJ (these guys like the one word names), whose backup vocals fit to Ginger's melodic growl like a glove.

Now the Wildhearts are back in the United States with their first US record deal in more than a decade. *Riff After Riff*, on Gearhead Records, is a compilation of B-sides from Wildhearts singles released in England and Japan in the last year. It seems the band has a new lease on life and they're chugging out thunderous punk-pop moto-metal like never before. You have to give a big chunk of the credit to frontman Ginger's unwavering perseverance and indefatigable talent. The guitarist, singer-songwriter is a father two times over, happily married, and sober.

I sat down with Ginger to catch up on the state of one of Britain's most notorious bands, and most of all to get some parenting advice from a veteran rocker.

Interview by **Sam Weller**

Illustration by **Dustin Mertz**

It's been 11 years since you've released an album in the United States and toured here. What the hell took so long?

You know what? I don't have a clue. I guess there have been a lot of trends in America that we didn't fit into. To make matters worse, we've got a reputation of not being the most entirely trustworthy people on the planet. No one really wants to work with

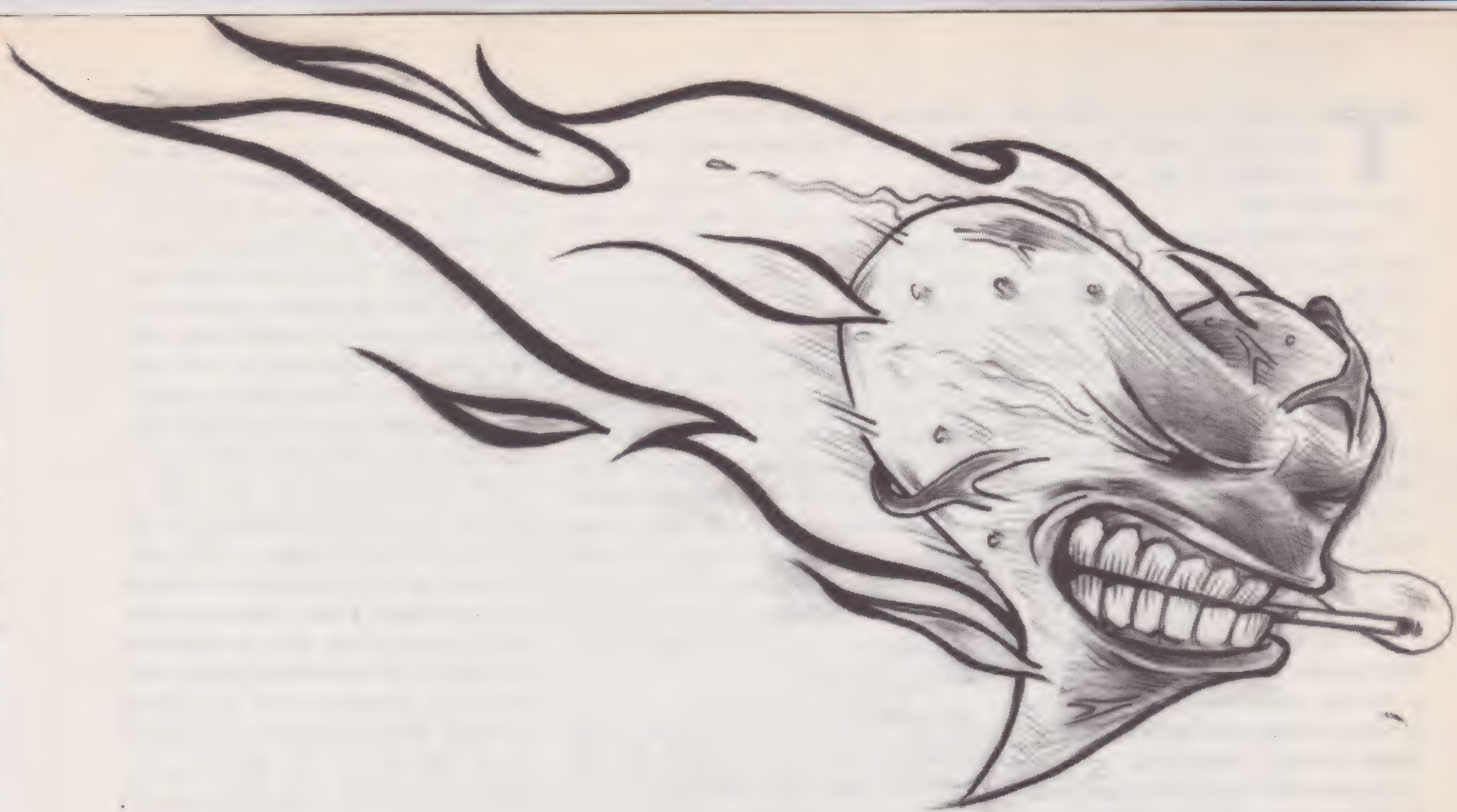
junkies and alcoholics. As soon as we decided to knock all of that stupid "live fast, die young" shit on the head, things really started to work for us. It's no secret that you get what you put in. I don't think we were putting enough in before.

How clean is the band now?

Before we go on stage—before we play a single note—the band is absolutely clean. When the guys come off stage, they can do whatever the fuck they want. It's all about celebrating the show now. When the guys play a really good show and they want to go out and get loaded, that's their business. As for me, I always go home sober.

So you're no longer drinking?

I've got a real reason for not drinking now. Having kids makes you rearrange your priorities. On top of that, it's just so fucking rare that a band gets a second chance. I'm a music historian, so I appreciate how fucking rare it is. Every now and again, I think I miss drinking and I fancy a bottle of whiskey; and I'll go out and get that bottle of whiskey and I'll turn it out. But fuck man, the hangover's liable to put me in hospital, so the last thing I want to do is get another bottle of whiskey. I wouldn't want to be one of those 12-step people who are con-



stantly pining for a drink. If I want to drink, I'll have one. I've found that when I give myself that kind of freedom, I want it less and less.

What role have booze and drugs played in your writing process? So many great writers have been drinkers.

I absolutely agree with you. You do get a different perspective when you're drunk, but it's still you. Every drink and every drug you take, it's hitting some kind of chemical compound in your brain that you can trigger off naturally. I love the idea of some of the greatest Irish poets being massive drunks, but they all died really fucking young. They died really painful deaths with cirrhosis of the liver and shit. I can't let my kids see me like that.

You're a dad now. My wife is having a baby in two months. Do you have any sage wisdom?

Hey man, if your kid's smiling, you're doing a good job. Do you know the sex yet?

Yeah. We're having a little girl.

Oh man, your plunging right into the deep end. She's going to take your heart. She's going to stick her little hands right into your chest. I can't tell you man— you've never loved anything or anyone like this before. You think you've loved, but you

haven't. It's a completely different level of love. You'll completely lose your sense of self and you won't miss it for a second.

***The Wildhearts Must be Destroyed* seemed to very subtly celebrate your newfound fatherhood. What are you writing about now?**

I've got a bunch of songs for the next album— about 30 songs in all. I'm sure our tour of America is going to inspire even more. When we finished *The Wildhearts Must be Destroyed*, I went a bit crazy and had a spell in the hospital. That produced a bunch of songs. ¶ When you're going through any trauma in your life, it's like you're shitting music—you simply can't write enough. I also spent Christmas in the Philippines falling back in love with my Mrs., so there's a lot of emotional turmoil going on there. I went out and bought myself the cheapest acoustic guitar in the world. I swear, every time I walked past, that thing would sing a new song to me. I'd just pick it up and write a song and I ended up with about 20 in a week.

I'm wondering what motivates you after 15 years of doing this. What drives you now?

A lot of it boils down to what's going to happen to you in a couple of months. Fatherhood drives you to be a better person. No one wants to be a shit dad. Well,

some people do— my father did— but I don't want it to be that way. That motivation seeps into every aspect of your life. When you look at your kids, you see the most beautiful thing you've ever laid eyes on, and you made them. You start to wonder: if I can do this, and it gives me so much joy in return, maybe I should put that kind of love and care into every aspect of my life. It's like I said: You've never loved like this before. It's the key to passion— it teaches you to love life.

Do you worry about peaking as an artist?

I think not. I think rock'n'roll needs some elder statesmen. I was there when punk started. I was there the day it made its first headline. I was there the day the Pistols said "fuck" on TV. It's an essential part of my soul—I can't shake it. I've been around for a while and I can talk about a lot of things these young bands can't talk about. I don't understand why people get bunched up about age— every fucking person gets old. Why give yourself such an arbitrary fucking deadline? Look at Johnny Cash: He was fucking older than I am when he made it big. If you've still got it in you, let it out. ©

Temporary Residence Limited has only recently fulfilled its moniker. Up until a year ago, the label was very much stationary.

"Henry Owings from *Chunklet* wrote me a letter in about 1997, explaining that he really liked the label, but that the name was false advertising," says Temporary's owner Jeremy Devine. "He said I should just move around the country all the time and live in a car."

Devine finally lived up to the label's name last year when he uprooted from Baltimore, the label's home since 1995, and carted the whole operation across the country to Portland, Oregon. Now he's trucked it all back to the eastside in June, planting TRL in Brooklyn. For now.

Though it has mostly stayed put, Jeremy's label has never stalled. Take a glance at three of his most recent releases, and you'll find mind-breaking improvised dubby rhythms (Nice Nice's *Chrome*), slow-burning, ephemeral piano/guitar (Eluvium's *An Accidental Memory in the Case of Death*) and true-blue fantasy metal (Nightfist's *The Epic*). The only uniformity about TRL is in each release's quality, and in Jeremy's commitment—bordering on obsession—to releasing the most emotionally resonant music he can find with little to no concern for paybacks.

In this day and age of mega-indies and the ever-increasing grey-area of major-label influence on smaller labels, it's always refreshing to see someone like Devine doing it the old fashioned way—and succeeding.

Interview by **Julianne Shepherd**

I heard one of the bands on your label just signed to a major.

The bigger my label and the bands get, the harder it is for me to understand the idea of people abandoning an independent to sign to a major. I don't have any problems getting by, I'm making more money than I ever have, and I feel like I'm superseding accomplishments, so it's weird to me that someone could get to that point and feel like they still need to sign to a major to get by. But I guess owning a label and being in a band are two totally different things.

People just ignore the decades of major-label horror stories for the sake of instant gratification.

I think so. It's weird; I'm only 27 and I don't *feel* that old, but I've lived long enough and been involved in the same scene enough to see the same patterns recycle themselves three or four times over. It's weird for me, remembering when I first started going to shows in like '91, and had all these friends who would say, "Oh so and so signed to a major or this punk band just sold 100,000 records." It's weird to see that cycle, in only 10 years' time, repeat itself three times. That cycle makes young people older than they actually are. I'm not 40. I haven't been doing this for 20 years. I shouldn't be old enough to know better—especially when the people doing it are the same age as I am.

Now at the same time, you've just licensed Eluvium's record to *The Real World*. How does that fit into your view of majors and the like?

That's something that's super hard to reconcile. Any of these arguments are kind of worthless to have if you insist on not allowing yourself to contradict yourself. It's weird owning a label; my obligations are with my bands. I can talk about being punk and my ideals until I'm blue in the face, but at the end of the day, I can't tell Eluvium I can't do something. I can't have the *Real World* call and say, "We really like this record and we want to license these songs," and know that Eluvium stands to gain a lot of opportunities from that. He's not making a lot of money off sales because he's making fringe records. If I can find a way to make him happy and make some amount of money for him without any of us feeling that it's compromising the music, then everyone wins. But it's something I struggle with all the time. ¶ It's easy to be in a band and say, "We're not going to do this or that because it will compromise our beliefs as an independent entity." It's different being a label and thrusting all of your opinions onto all your bands. I have an obligation not to limit their opportunities because ultimately I want it to keep working. I don't

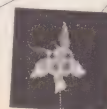
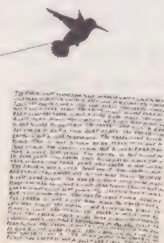
want to play into the automatic assumption that once a band gets to a certain size they go sign to a different label. I'm happy with the grassroots way we've done it, but it's instances like, when Universal Pictures calls and says, "We really like Explosions, and we would like them to score one of our movies"—they're scoring a huge film that Billy Bob Thornton is in—I can't stand in the way of that. In my opinion, that's Universal and fuck those dudes, but I'm not an asshole dad. The reason I signed Explosions in the first place is because they had total confidence in the label and the music we put out. They really looked up to the label and the records we had released. I don't want to let them down by saying they can't do something they want to. We still avoid so many of the fucked-up channels—we're not hiding anything. We're distributed by a relatively small distributor in Bloomington, Indiana. Everybody works their asses off. And I can't afford to hire anybody.

But Universal is still a major corporation.

It's still a major corporation. But while we want to succeed at what we're doing, we won't trade in any of the values that made us do what we're doing in order to get famous. I release a lot of instrumental music. The way I look at it is if there's gonna be instrumental music that plays on relatively silly TV shows, it's cool that somebody who's doing it for the right reasons is getting paid for it. It's cool that Matthew [from Eluvium], who lives in a tiny apartment in Seattle and can barely make rent and does it simply because he loves music, actually gets paid.

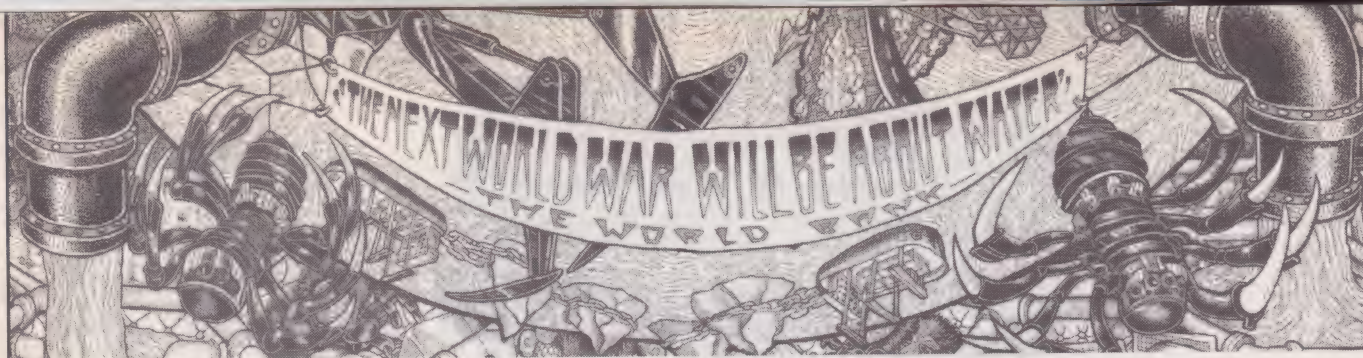
Trying to totally escape from corporate culture can sometimes seem really futile.

I think it's important to not give up on the idea that there are major corporations that are extremely toxic to independent music, but there's a time and place for everything. If there are people who decide that they want to get famous on a major, then so be it—it either works or it doesn't—but there are people who are just as fine or better the





MUCH IS BECAUSE OF INDEPENDENT CULTURE, NOT BECAUSE WE TRIED TO
PUSH IT TO WAL-MART OR BEST BUY.



BEEHIVE COLLECTIVE

It's been five centuries since the Europeans "discovered" the natural wealth of Latin America; to this day, the US government continues this legacy. Whether we are trying to "end" the drug war — through misguided projects like Plan Colombia—or gouge away Latin America for trade routes between the US and Asia— Plan Puebla Panama— the bottom line is that these plans will deplete the ecosystem, increase US business' stronghold, and escalate civil violence throughout the region.

But six years ago, while US planes were spraying toxic herbicides over what they thought were coca fields in the Andes and oil giants were sticking their syringes into the ground of Latin America, activists from all over the country were descending on Seattle to protest the World Trade Organization of 1999. The protests had an unexpected turnout and an even more unexpected outcome: The individuals and organizations born out of Seattle had the momentum, shrewdness, and networking capabilities to carry on the cause after the conference.

One organization that was born that week was the Maine-based Beehive Collective. Incorporating art and activism, the Collective

makes a connection between words and pictures to create accessible, powerful art on important issues. The posters the collective make are a dense cacophony of images that are as beautiful as they are horrifying, illustrating the plight of Latin and South America at the hands of the US government.

The bees take their non-copyrighted posters on massive tours, giving speeches and workshops in high schools, communities and colleges. The group travels around Latin America as much as they do here, teaching the horrors of US foreign policy and learning everything they can from their Latino activist counterparts. To compound their effectiveness, the collective's campaigns are always launched in sync with pivotal moments, like the Mesoamerican Forum in El Salvador and the Social Forum of the Americas in Ecuador this summer.

I talked to one busy bee, who— along with her fellow buzzers— remains anonymous. But name or no name, her words create a vivid sketch of an enraged, yet hopeful person, as true to herself as she is to her hive.

Interview by **Abbie Jarman**

You all work so covertly; I rarely see interviews or quotes from you. When I do, there is rarely a name or any sense of who you are. How many people are involved?

The official answer to that depends on what day you ask the question. [laughs] We have a base in Eastern Maine, but we're very decentralized. At any point in time there are around six backbone bees and usually around 30 bees altogether. But people come in and out all the time. There are usually more people here in the summer because we have an apprenticeship program. ¶ We're a lot smaller than people think and that's really because we're big strategy nerds. The trick is to come up with materials that self-replicate and take on a life of their own, so they can get out to as many people as possible. We want people to like the work so much that they want to distribute them on their own. That's why the story component of the posters is so important—we want to give people something they can feel connected to so that they want to tell the story more. It's really impossible to know how many people are



actually using the materials; it's definitely a lot more than just us.

Has the membership stayed stable since the collective was founded?

No, it's had a lot of turnover. That's because there is no model for what we are doing. We actually came together around the other thing we do besides posters: stone mosaic murals, which is a lot of what we teach with the apprenticeship program. There's been a lot of up and down with how to be a collective when it's so decentralized and has a base in this really small town. A lot of the people who have come through the collective so far have been in their early 20s—activists who hunger for something tangible; they want something they can do with their hands. Not everyone wants to, or can, stick around forever, and so they take off. ¶ It's been hard to figure out a way to have something that's more sustainable, but it's looking up. We own our own building now—It's a great place where we can come together to do this work. It's a strange miracle that we're almost done paying for this huge, beautiful building on the ocean

with poster money—that people are willing to support it all through 10 dollar posters is really a testimony to how badly there is a need for more of the kind of work that we are doing. I think it has a lot to do with the fact that they are very useful learning tools and there's a need for that kind of innovation, but it might have a little bit to do with the fact that the posters are really nice.

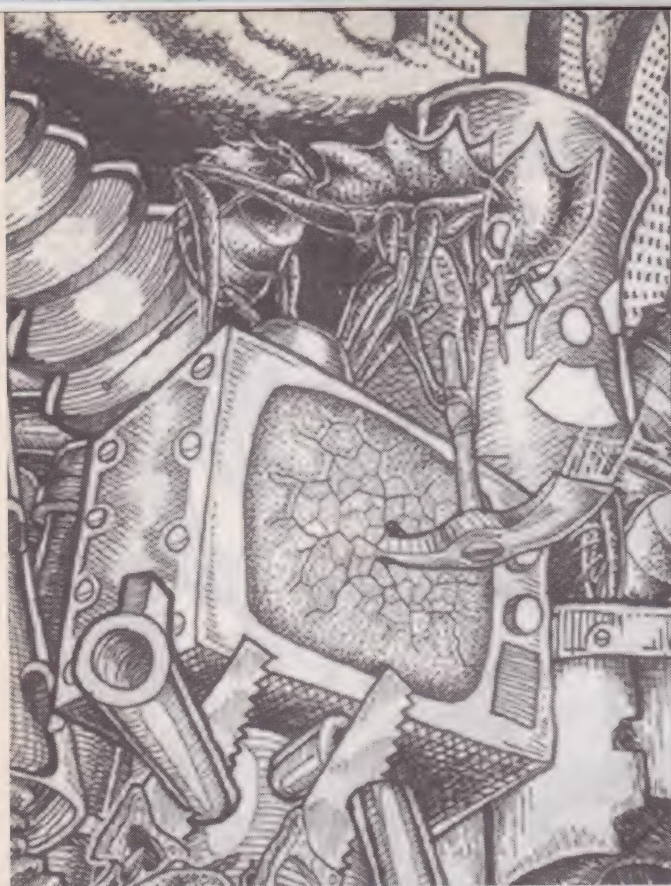
Why do you think the combination of art and activism is so effective?

Most people don't necessarily learn best by sitting still, in a chair, listening to a lecture. It doesn't stick in your head—especially when people are talking about *really* bad news that you'd rather not think about, or feel guilty about. How the fuck are you supposed to retain all that? There are other ways to talk about bad news so that people can take it in on a personal level and be quiet with it and absorb it at their own pace. There's no reason to get in their face and tell them what they should think. Images are a very powerful way to get a message to people—they digest it on this other level. ¶ That's the good side, but then there's a lot of work to

be done with bridging those things and making them really sharp and really smart. Something that we talk about in our collective a lot and have a lot of boundaries with, is cultural appropriation and what responsibilities there are in how you relate someone else's story. It's kind of an integrity thing that we are constantly evolving. Every step that we have taken, we have been really careful and really respectful in the way that we convey people's stories from places that most of us in the Collective could never even imagine living through—the violence and the fear and the depression. It's fun to work in the medium that we're in but it's also something really serious and needs to be really sharp.

Has anyone come back at you saying that something you have done has appropriated the culture?

Not really. It's kind of confusing, actually. The tour that we're on right now, we'll ask people if it's OK to use this or that image—like a Mayan image that we wouldn't dare use—just to see what they say and they say, "Oh yeah, please put it in there," and we're



like, "No!" There's this whole legacy of cultural appropriation in art and we're coming from the side of the translators, so we know that language well. But they see these images first hand, and so they understand them differently. Sometimes it's our job to see that. ¶ Like with the Colombia poster, we tried really hard to not steal anything. It was a *huge* challenge: How do we make this poster look like it's about this place and not steal any of the aesthetics that are the intellectual property of the indigenous people that live there? Not that we abide by intellectual property rules, but as far as it goes with culture and indigenous people's culture, if we have any way to convey the ideas without stealing their aesthetics we're going to do that.

Is that why you used the insect motif on that poster—to pull it outside of the culture?

Yes. We don't draw humans because it's so easy to be stereotypical and get into what they look like or what their gender is or what color they are or what their facial features are. It's really easy to sway the story by having humans in it, so instead we use animals, plants, or insects that are bio-regionally specific to the place that we are

trying to represent. On this project right now, we're getting political people to talk about what animal from their community they want to represent them. It's a really fun conversation because people just don't expect us to be asking them that and they've never been asked that before. It's a really fun exchange.

What is the current project?

We're working on the next graphic, about this issue called Plan Puebla Panama, or PPP, which basically is a mega-development project that's aimed to restructure Mesoamerica in preparation for the implementation of the FTAA. It's the same old story that's been happening for hundreds of years, where Central America is just "in the way" of trade routes to Asia. They want to make it easier to ship goods to the consumer markets in the East Coast and Europe. They're planning all these dry canals, dams and hydroelectric projects. They're chopping up the area to serve the agenda of free trade; they're building over communities so that goods can flow through the region faster. There's been tons of resistance all over the region. So instead of us drawing the picture of the

nightmare of what the PPP is and all this bad news and why you should care, we are trying to do it the hard way: We're trying to explain the PPP from the perspective of the resistance movement. Right now, there is a team of seven of us working on the project. We are about to be joined by three other people who started in Puebla, Mexico and are headed to Panama over the span of four months.

When you do outreach work with the posters, how does that work?

It's usually like four or six bees running around doing a lot of shows in a packed period of time. Last year we were on tour for seven months straight at high schools and community centers and colleges around the country. In Michigan we did 23 shows in five days! Two hours of talking about Plan Colombia over and over again just eats the circuits in your brain. Nothing like *living* through it, I'm sure, but it's really wild. Teachers are just so desperate for anything that will get kids to pay attention to economics. Teachers are always teasing us that activists think they're so subversive, but that it's just common sense. And if people just want to talk about common sense, well there's probably a venue for it. ©

WE DON'T DRAW HUMANS BECAUSE IT'S SO EASY TO BE STEREOTYPICAL

"Joe Meno writes with the energy, honesty, and emotional impact of the best punk rock. From the opening sentence to the very last word, *Hairstyles of the Damned* held me in his grip."

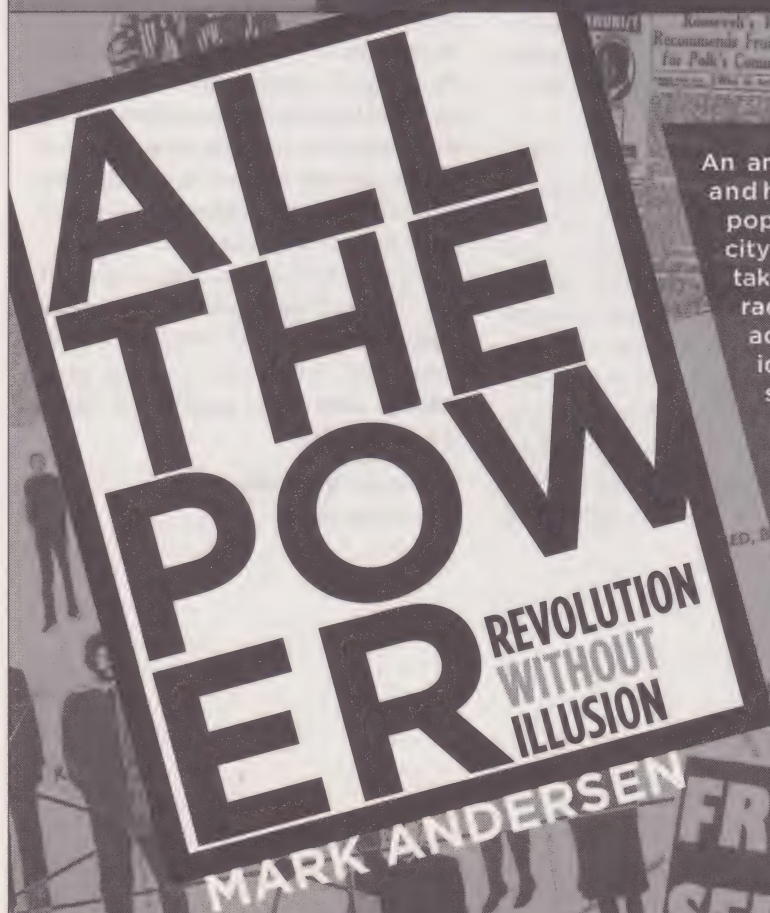
—Jim DeRogatis, pop music critic, *Chicago Sun-Times*

"This book is hella good. Joe Meno is the new insightful voice for the punk community. He manages to sink into the teenage-outcast experience, challenge segregation, and provide step-by-step instructions on dyeing hair pink in this realistic account of finding your identity. After reading *Hairstyles of the Damned*, I'm glad I'm not in high school anymore."

—Amy Schroeder, *Venus* magazine

hairstyles of the damned

a novel by joe meno



An ambitious, accessible mix of history, autobiography, and how-to-manual, this "anti-manifesto" challenges popular concepts of radical activism. Long-time inner-city organizer and punk rabble-rouser Mark Andersen takes aim at the illusions that tend to keep North American radicals self-satisfied but ineffective. A whirlwind tour across decades—through punk and student activism, identity and lifestyle politics, animal rights, armed struggle, patriotism, globalization, and beyond—this book seeks a radicalism that is both rigorously self-critical and genuinely populist. Leaping from agrarian socialist experiments of the early twentieth century to embattled 1960s streets to the fiercely independent punk underground of the 1980s and 190s to the present-day global-justice movement, *All the Power* suggests how the seemingly most idealistic of enterprises—revolution—might be practically accomplished.

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"Mother please be proud, father be forgiving.
Even though you told me, 'Son, you'll never
make a living.'"

—"I Was Meant For The Stage"

Colin Meloy was indeed meant for the stage—or for an afternoon in the study with a dusty novel or an early evening in bed with a hot mug of chamomile—which in a funny way explains why he so often finds himself backed into a corner. Released a year ago, the Decemberists' second album, *Her Majesty, The Decemberists*, was, as these things go, very much the work of someone who can boast both a creative writing degree and a pretty kick-ass book collection. This was an album that you could quite accurately file under "literary pop," and though this very fact would later be used to rib Meloy a bit, there is something entirely timeless to what he had managed to create. The songs on *Her Majesty* didn't just sound like they were penned by great authors, they were actually *about* great authors, and that pretty much sums up the way that they would be perceived. The Decemberists are one of the few members of the Kill Rock Stars roster to have ever made a racket this quaint or this quietly and Meloy and his bandmates—guitarist Chris Funk, bassist

Nate Query, keyboardist Jenny Conlee and drummer Rachel Blumberg—probably understand better than most why they've been type-casted this way.

Of course, that's only half the story.

Raised in the suburbs of Montana, Meloy wasn't exactly leading vegan communes and putting on all-ages shows in his formative years. As an obsessive fan of the sort of jangly guitar rock that would become synonymous with college radio in the late '80s—REM, Hüsker Dü, and Robin Hitchcock's post-Soft Boys career—Meloy stood in such intense awe of these artists that it wasn't until he reached his mid-20s and relocated to Portland that he began playing his own songs publicly.

Releasing a debut album called *Castaways & Cutouts* on local indie Hush two years ago, it was hard to imagine that this same timid fanboy would stand shoulder-to-shoulder with some of his childhood heroes or that *Her Majesty's* slow burning success would lead the Decemberists to become one of the most passionately followed bands around. But it has. In the past few months I've seen Meloy play in three different states, and it's clear that his charming, narrative folk is connecting more personally and pervasively with each passing

day. He's also become as interesting a frontman as those he would put on a pedestal: he closed their set in Los Angeles by breaking a mandolin in half, then in New York weeks later he steered fans toward the voter registration booth they brought along on tour with them. He still wasn't punk in the two-fingers-held-aloft-sense of the word, but he could relate.

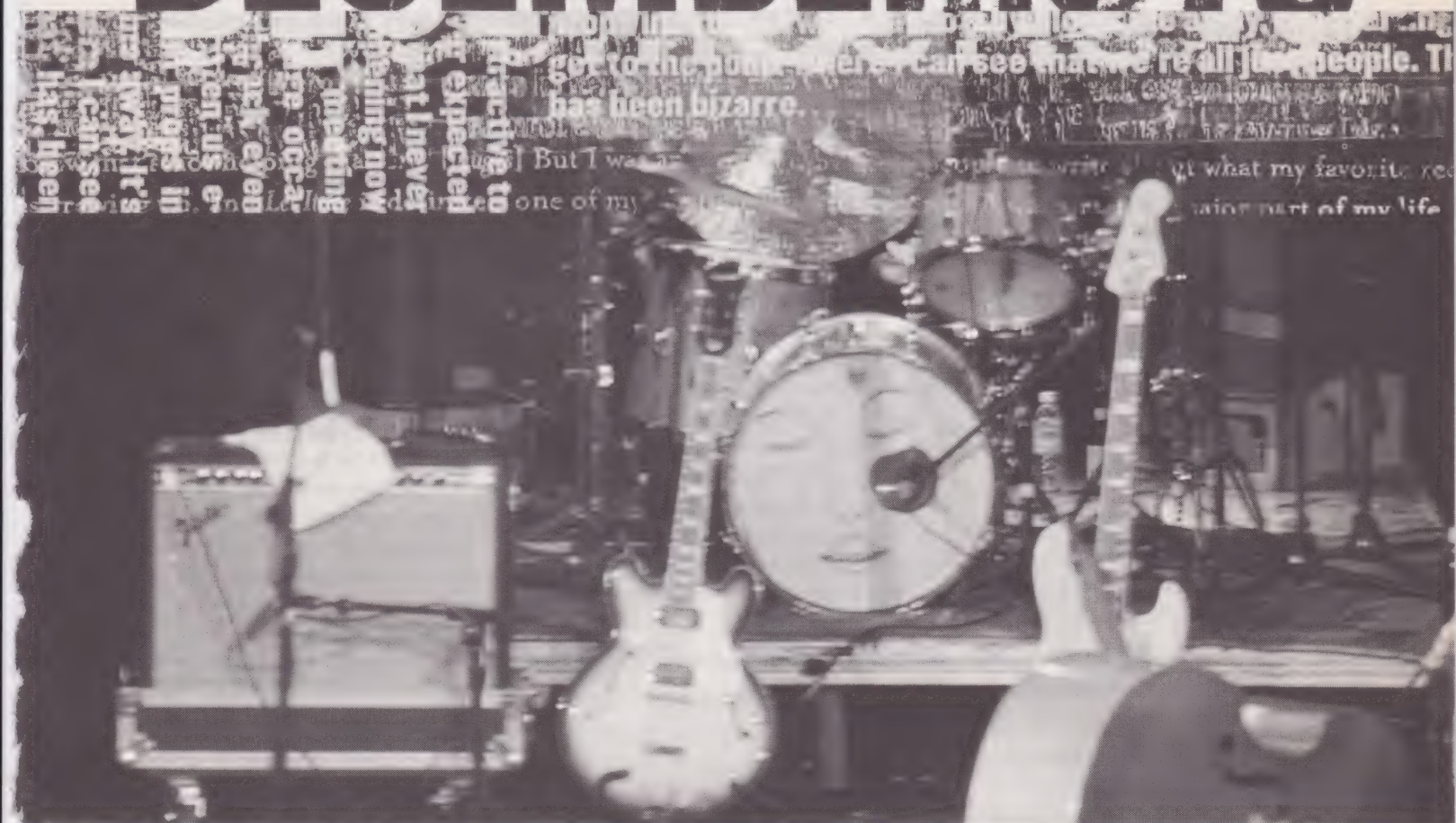
That he is also someone who is incredibly easy to relate to is what led me to a tree-shaded hill in New York City's Central Park this past June. That's where Meloy asked me to meet him for his interview with *Punk Planet*. Discussing his reputation among critics and fans, as well as the commercial upswing his contemporaries in the Pacific Northwest are currently experiencing, Meloy was always unfailingly honest. There was never a judgment cast, just humble proof that DIY that can be both personalized and personified in rather unlikely ways.

"I want to be able to continue to do this and live comfortably and sometimes that requires breaking out of that mold a little," Meloy said, letting out a telling smile. "Because when there's seven people, touring in a van can suck."

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**

Photos by **Sam Martin**

DECEMBERISTS





So has this finally become the only job you have?

It has, and that's a childhood dream that will keep me going for another . . . two years, probably. [laughs]

What surprised you the most about the success you've had this year?

That it happened at all. I assumed that with it being our second record, people wouldn't really grab on to it. It seemed like we could only be attractive to a really marginal audience; I never expected it to be this big. There are things that I never expected to happen that are happening now for us: Opening for the Pixies or meeting Robyn Hitchcock—these are huge occasions for me. That Robyn Hitchcock even knows who we are and has written us e-mails thanking us for giving him props in interviews, that totally blows me away. It's starting to get to the point where I can see that we're all just people. That has been bizarre.

Do you have trouble admitting to yourself that these people are beginning to accept you?

Every germ of my being says, "You will never be friends with Robyn Hitchcock," so it has been surprising. It happened so quickly and I really have no explanation for it. I think there's something in the music that people have latched onto. But we're still not cool like Death Cab For Cutie. I don't think we'll ever be embraced by the cast of *The OC*. Death Cab has been working on this for so long that you want to see them get their due. Four years ago you would see them playing at Lola's Room

in Portland and now it has just exploded. The Shins' record I think is just phenomenal, so that's really amazing to see as well. I still feel like we're the pups in that scene. We're still very new to it.

How old were you when you started this band?

It was three years ago, so I was 26.

At that age there seems to be a lot of doubt. At least that's how it's been for me so far. [laughs]

It absolutely was that way for me. I had just moved to Oregon and I was playing open mics. I started getting Monday night slots at shitty bars playing to five or 10 people. That was really hard. My sister was becoming incredibly successful and her life was really taking off and my family kept wondering what I was doing. I felt like the lost kid. I remember spending time with my sister that Christmas and telling her that I was going to drop all of this and go back to school or something.

But that ended up not happening—how?

I gave myself a little bit longer, and for some reason things started taking off. It all came in baby steps and each one felt like a monumental occasion. From the point that I started playing open mic nights to when we actually had enough money to go into a studio and record a proper recording to then when Hush wanted to put it out—that was enough to keep me going. ¶ To everyone's surprise, Kill Rock Stars came in fairly quickly after that. When Slim Moon [owner of Kill Rock Stars] initially showed interest

and said he wanted to sign us, I was just like, "You do?!" It didn't make any sense to me. But I think the Kill Rock Stars roster has really begun to vary to the point that we fit in now. Maybe in some weird way. [laughs]

Do you pay attention to how this band is perceived?

I thought at first that if I paid too much attention to it that it might influence how I think or how I write, but I don't think it has. It has sort of blended into this one big article or this one big interview for me—man, what a negative thing to say while doing an interview! [laughs] But it has come to a point where there are certain things that people pick up on—points where you know some journalists have read what other journalists have written—and it has become this one singular thing. It's an unchanging thing that's always going to be here. If anything, it becomes a fun thing to play with. ¶ I think that's what Morrissey did when he created this identity for himself and journalists got all over it; They created this media entity that became Morrissey, even though it was bizarrely separate from the actual Morrissey. He played with that and it became another part of his show. To a certain degree, the whole thing makes me want to write more songs about books and literary figures.

The way you talk about a lot of these things seems very sensible.

Yeah, I am sort of a sensible guy.

AT THIS POINT I'M NOT GOING TO SAY, "WE WILL ALWAYS BE IN A VAN AND WE WILL ALWAYS RECORD OUR RECORDS FOR UNDER FIVE GRAND." THAT DIY ETHIC CAN BE SUCH A PIE-IN-THE-SKY THING. PEOPLE THAT REALLY ADHERE TO THAT WILL JUST SUFFER FOR ALL OF THEIR LIVES. [PAUSES] IS THAT A BAD THING TO SAY?

Listening to the music, you wouldn't expect that.

People who approach me at shows probably have a different image in their heads about who I am. In the rock world it's expected that the persona you create on stage and the persona you create in the music is who you have to be—which is really quite dumb. There should be a disconnect there. This is a work of the imagination, but people actually expect me to talk in some sort of transatlantic accent and use all these huge words and be really academic all of the time. But I'm just not that way. I am a pretty sensible person, like you said. You wouldn't go up to some novelist who is writing something fantastic and think the same thing—there's a disconnect there that for some reason the public allows—but it's different in pop music. That's probably why I get a lot of people coming up to me saying, "Oh my God you write such weird songs. How does that work?" But I am just creating stories.

Do some of the people that come up to you seem disappointed?

I'm sure they are, and that's fine.

But what else could they want from you—are you supposed to go home and read even more?

I do think it's fair to say that we write about literate things, and that we're articulate and the other five words that writers constantly use to describe us. I also think they do that to antagonize us a bit. It gives them the opportunity to make the readership angry. We played in Denver recently and there was

a big article in the weekly that said, "The Decemberists are smarter than you." [laughs] They wrote something about how we don't want anyone who enjoys sports showing up at our shows and how we only want drama club kids there. That night someone came up to me after the show and said, "I read the article and I like sports and I like your band, too."

So you threw him out, right?

It was so silly! The whole literary high-minded thing is kind of ironic, anyway. It's not like we sleep with *Wuthering Heights* underneath our pillows.

Aren't you writing a book right now?

I finished it, actually. It's about the Replacements.

Ummm . . .

Yeah, I know that's not helping matters. [laughs] But I was approached by these people to write about what my favorite record was growing up, and *Let It Be* is definitely one of my all-time favorite records. It was a major, major part of my life, so I chose to write a memoir about growing up in Montana and how the Replacements spoke to my marginalized adolescence. ¶ It's turning out to be a really busy year. In August we'll begin recording with Chris Walla five blocks from my house in this old Presbyterian church.

Do they realize that they're letting a band that's on a label called Kill Rock Stars record there?

They do, actually. [laughs] But if they listen

to the music I don't think they're going to get too freaked out about it. That's in August and then we'll have to sit on it until March because I might be working on a musical this winter. It's kind of a kid's play and I will be writing all the music; Glen Berger is the playwrite. I might even go to London to work on that.

Do you think you can get comfortable doing things this way?

At this point I'm not going to say, "We will always be in a van and we will always record our records for under five grand." That DIY ethic can be such a pie-in-the-sky thing. People that really adhere to that will just suffer for all of their lives. [pauses] Is that a bad thing to say?

I suppose that all depends on your perspective.

Regardless of what sort of music you play, when you get to this level you are going to adopt the DIY mentality to a degree. The people who don't—and who categorically refuse to do that—are the ones who suffer through ASCAP songwriter showcases and things like that. That's why we have a community and resources for bands that are working this way. But it can be stupid to limit yourself to that. Surprisingly, a lot of the people that are actually in bands don't espouse all of those sort of dogmatic DIY ethics; some of them have kids now and they want to live comfortably and will do things accordingly. I don't think you should blame people for wanting to use some of these more mainstream resources. You can do this ethically. ☺

From the start, rock'n'roll has always been in love with love. Like a never-ending secret letter, the subject of love is central to the idea of American music, with its recombined come-hither testimonies sung along to its reinvented, crazy-kid beat. These songs you've been singing aren't just about love: they're the magic words you wish you could think to say, perfect in their charm and end-rhyme and simplicity.

An example: at a roller skating party in fifth grade, I held a girl's hand and veered along the blue rink, closing my eyes, wanting to speak, to let the girl I was skating with know how I was feeling, but I settled instead for the sentiments of Madonna as she crooned "Crazy for You" oh so gently. What could I say that a singer on a record could not say better? Nothing.

It seems it has always been this way: every song played on every radio station in every part of the world works as a kind of secret message sent from one forlorn lover to another and we, the audience, are listening in, translating the pet names and shared jokes, finding meaning in a word or phrase that makes us, for a brief moment, think of the one we are at

that instant adoring. In this way, no one is ever alone—the song being the thing that, serves as perfect, immutable proof of the shared, secret world of two people.

The Like Young is comprised of two people exactly: Amanda and Joe Ziemba. The couple began playing in the Champaign, Illinois band Wolfie in 1997 and were married some years later. Their first record as the Like Young, *Art Contest*, was released on Parasol records in 2003 and received critical acclaim from places as diverse as the *LA Times* and *Venus* magazine.

Following several national tours, including an opening slot for Mates of State, the Like Young return with their second record, *So Serious*. It's a stellar rock record, infectious in its unabashed simplicity. Bashing out 12 songs in 24 minutes, the song sweetly suggest how day-job hassles and self-inflicted hang-ups can somehow be countered with the comfort of knowing somebody will be there when you come home each evening.

Interview by **Joe Meno**

Photos by **Joe Wigdahl**

How did the two of you meet?

Joe: I was a freshman in college, Amanda was a junior in high school. We met through a friend, RJ Porter. I was in a band with RJ at the time and we were playing this basement show and Amanda was there. It was the first time I saw her and I was like, "Ah, man."

Amanda: He was in a band so I knew who he was.

Had you seen him play before?

Amanda: Yeah, I had just never talked to him. He was a senior. I was a sophomore.

Joe: We didn't actually talk. I just saw her. I was like, "Wow, who's that? I have to meet her," but it didn't happen that night. I was in a photo class for school and I had to take a whole roll of film so I was taking photos at the party that night. I remember when I developed them there were like three photos of Amanda. I called RJ and said, "You have to get me her number, I have to meet her." I'd had only one girlfriend in high school, so I was pretty nervous. Finally RJ called me with her number.

So you just called her up?

Amanda: RJ asked me for my number because he said Joe wanted to call me. So the first time we talked was on the phone. It was a halfway blind date.

What did you talk about?

Amanda: We talked for like four hours and then we went to the movies. We saw *Leaving Las Vegas*. Then we went to IHOP.

Joe: That week sticks out so much in my mind because I was trying to get into the design program at the University of Illinois and I was working on my portfolio all week and then I was really pissed off that my portfolio wasn't going well and so I just called Amanda. It was amazing, and the next week I got into the program.

How long were you dating before you started playing music together?

Amanda: About a year. We just started fooling around and made a couple four track tapes together.

Just the two of you?

Amanda: Yeah. But Joe's other band, Slackjawed, started adding keyboards to what they were recording and they wanted to do that live and so I joined the band playing keyboards.

Joe: That band turned into Wolfie.

Amanda: We played for like five years.

Joe: We toured a little bit while we were all in school. We didn't really practice that much. When one of the original members of Wolfie left, it wasn't working out and we weren't sure what we wanted to do. We were

deciding if we still wanted to play music or give it up, but I kept writing songs. I started writing when I was 16 and never stopped. Plus, Amanda was sick of the keyboards and wanted to play the drums. So we started playing together again and it was fun! Towards the end of Wolfie, it wasn't fun. There was a different line-up and our last album sucked. It started off new-wave, stripped-down, keyboard stuff and then it was very '60s-influenced pop, and then we got very heavily psychedelic.

Amanda: It became a mess. It was whatever we were listening to.

What was your idea how this new band, the Like Young, was supposed to sound?

Amanda: Stripped-down, no solos.

Joe: Throw out all the bullshit that was in our music: all these super-long songs, all these parts, all this overdubbing. I just wanted to completely strip it down.

And that became your first record, *Art Contest*?

Joe: Yeah, we were focusing on the melody instead of all these different parts.

So you decided to do this two person band in 2001. Where were other two person bands you were looking at, by chance?

Amanda: It was pretty coincidental—weird, not spooky—because while we'd heard of the White Stripes, we'd play and that's all



the like young

anybody would say.

What was the benefit of the two person band as you saw it?

Amanda: Well, we could practice whenever we wanted. And we could share everything.

Joe: It just got really focused.

Amanda: We kind of had the same mindset.

Joe: We had all these diverging things and we finally knew what we wanted to do.

What did you miss, having played in larger bands? Were there drawbacks?

Joe: The only drawback at the time was the White Stripes comparisons, which really didn't matter, looking back.

One of the most interesting things about your band is the shared vocals. Tell me about your songwriting process—who writes what in terms of music and lyrics?

Joe: For the first two records, I wrote all the lyrics and the music and the parts. I think that just grew out of the way it had always been. Amanda was more the editor, if something didn't work. But the stuff we're doing for the next album is totally collaborative.

Lyricaly, the new album seems to have a lot of songs that make reference to having bad day jobs.

Joe: I had a job with a large corporation for about a year and a half and it was probably the unhappiest year and a half I ever had. It was supposed to be design work, but basically it was just computer skills. There was a lot of stuff going on there that brought out

a lot of feelings in me, like how women were being treated there.

So is this what you're talking about in the songs "Routines" and "Degenerate"?

Joe: There are a few songs on the album that are specifically about people at that job. I still haven't gotten all of those feelings out of my system. I saw a lot of sexism—it was out of control. I couldn't believe it was going on. It was really uncomfortable. "Degenerate" is about a specific incident where I was waiting for an elevator and this guy came out of the office with this woman who had been interviewing for a job there. She was a voluptuous woman and he was escorting her to the elevator and there were three or four of these big wigs around and this guy was like, "Yeah, she'll probably get the job. Did you see the tits on her?" and then he elbows me. I wasn't even talking to him.

The thing I love is that, in your songs, the antidote to the bad day job is coming home and lying in bed with someone you like.

Joe: That's exactly one of the songs, "Tighten My Tie." I had a lot of anxiety and migraines from the job and I was sitting at my desk at work and I started to lose my vision from this migraine and so I had to go home.

Amanda: Every day there was something bad happening there. It was like just thinking about how you went to college to be a designer and you're sitting in your cubicle, and you have to drive an hour and a half to get there.

Joe: But then I came home and turned it

around because I had Amanda.

You're so unapologetic about being sentimental. I think that's great. I think if you listen to a lot of punk or rock'n'roll in general, you think you have to apologize for discussing those feelings in a song, just because Henry Rollins or Axl Rose never talked so seriously about love.

Joe: Yeah.

What's the last line in that particular song? I remember loving it because it sums all of this up.

Joe: "I want you to lie next to me."

That's simple and profound. How does being married affect making music together? Is there more possibility for conflict or tension, or do you feel it's actually more productive?

Joe: It's way more productive.

Amanda: I think sometimes—not now, but before when we were starting—it might have been hard because you were afraid to hurt the other person's feelings. If someone was making a mistake, then it became an argument between us, as husband and wife.

Joe: Like, "How can you forget how to play that drum part?" That hasn't happened in a while though.

Amanda: Not since we first started. It was also when Joe was at that job.

Joe: I was pissed off all day sitting in that tiny cubicle.

Amanda: Now we don't argue about any of it.

Joe: The great thing about it is that you can completely be yourself at all times, no matter what. ©



The Like Young answers pressing questions from the Home Edition of the Newlywed Game!

Question 1) If Joe had to cook you dinner, what would he prepare for you?

Amanda: Grilled cheese.

Joe, what did you write down as your answer?

Joe: Chicken.

That's zero points for the Like Young. You know Mates of State got three out of three right. So did the White Stripes.

Joe: Really?

No, I'm just joking. Question 2) What color is your husband's favorite necktie?

Amanda: That's easy. Blue.

Joe: Blue and green stripes.

Amanda: You know what? You're wrong. There's no green in it. It's navy blue and light blue.

No fighting, no fighting, the judges will give you points for that one. OK final question: Who is your husband's favorite band of all time?

Joe: I don't even know.

Amanda: What do you think I would guess?

Joe: Nirvana.

Amanda: Nirvana.

Two out of three isn't bad.

Joe: We'll talk about it when we get home.



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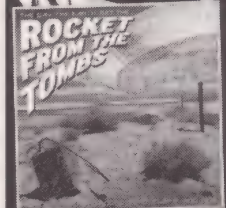
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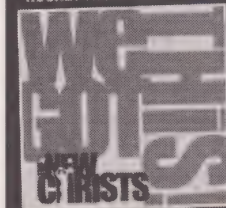
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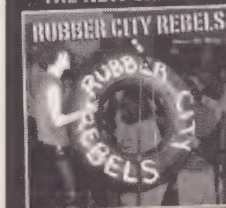
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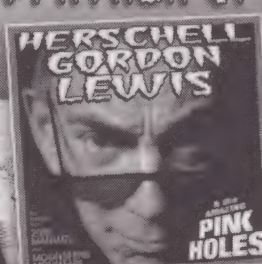


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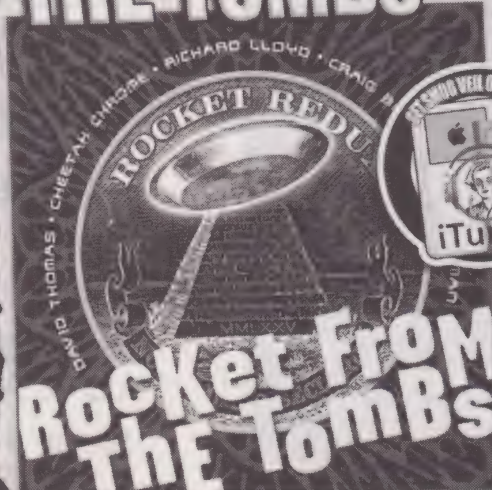
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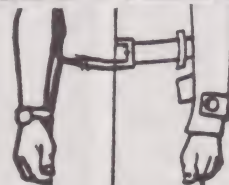
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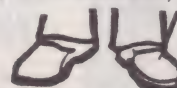
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Blog entries by Riverbend

Riverbend—her real name is not known—introduced herself to whomever was paying attention in an August 17, 2003 post to her blog, Baghdad Burning: "I'm female, Iraqi and 24. I survived the war. That's all you need to know. It's all that matters these days anyway." What follows are excerpts from her blog.

Occupation Day Friday, April 9, 2003

The last few days, I've been sorely trying to avoid a trip down memory lane. I flip the channel every time they show shots of Baghdad up in flames; I turn off the radio as they begin to talk about the first few days of occupation; I quietly leave the room as family members begin, "Remember how..."

I don't want to remember some of the worst days of my life. I wish there was some way one could selectively delete certain memories like one does files on a computer. However, that's impossible.

Today I'm letting my mind wander back to last April quite freely—April 9, 2003 in particular. The day the occupation became not a possibility, but a reality.

The day began with heavy bombing. I remember waking up at five a.m. to a huge explosion. The hair almost stood on my head. We were all sleeping in the living room because the drapes were heavy and offered some small security against shattering glass. E instantly jumped up and ran to make sure the Kalashnikov was loaded properly and I tried to better cover my cousin's children with the heavy blankets. The weather was already warm, but the blankets would protect the kids against glass. Their older daughter was still sound asleep—lost in a dream or a nightmare. The younger one lay in the semi-dark, her eyes wide open. I sensed her trying to read my face for some small reassurance. I smiled tightly, saying, "Go back to sleep."

After a few more colossal explosions, we all knew sleep would be useless. It was still too early for breakfast and no one was in the mood anyway. My mother and I got up to check the bags we had packed and waiting by the door.

The bags were packed during the first few days of war. They contained some sturdy clothes, bottles of water, important documents like birth certificates and ID papers, and some spare money. They were to remain by the door in case the ceiling came crashing down or the American tanks came plowing through the neighborhood. In either case, we were given specific instructions to run for the door and take the bags. "Don't wait for anyone—just run and take the bags with you," came the orders.

Our area was one of the more volatile. We had helicopters hovering above, fighter planes, and explosions. An area just across the main street had been invaded by tanks and we could hear the gunshots and tanks all night. My mother stood, unsure, at the window, trying to see the street. Were we supposed to evacuate? Were we supposed to stay in the house and wait? What was going to happen? E and my cousin volunteered to ask the neighbors their plans.

They came back five minutes later. E was pale and my cousin looked grim. Everyone on our street was in the same quandary—what was to be done? E said that while there were a few men in the

streets in our immediate area, the rest of Baghdad seemed almost empty. We negotiated leaving the house and heading for my uncle's home on the other side of Baghdad, but my cousin said that it would be impossible—the roads were all blocked, the bridges were cut off by American tanks and even if we were lucky enough to get anywhere near my uncle's area, we risked being shot by a tank or helicopter. No, we would wait it out at home.

My cousin's wife was wide-awake by then. She sat in the middle of her two children and held them close on either side. She hadn't spoken to her parents in almost a week now; there were no telephones to contact them and there was no way to get to their area. She was beyond terrified at this crucial point. She was certain that they were all dead or dying. The only thing that seemed to be keeping her functioning was the presence of her two young daughters.

At that point, my mind was numb. All I could do was react to the explosions—flinch when one was particularly powerful and automatically say a brief prayer of thanks when another was further away. Every once in a while, my brain would clear enough to do some mindless chore, like fill the water pots or fold the blankets, but otherwise, I felt numb.

It was almost noon when the explosions calmed somewhat and I risked going outside for a few moments. The planes were freely coming and going and—along with the sound of distant gunshots—only they pierced the eerie silence. My mother joined me outside a few minutes later and stood next to me under a small olive tree.

"In case we have to leave, there are some things I want to be sure you know," she said, and I nodded vaguely, studying a particularly annoying plane we were calling "buggeh," or "bug," as it made the sound of a mosquito while it flew. We later learned it was a surveyor plane that scanned certain areas for resistance or Iraqi troops.

"The documents in the bag contain the papers for the house, the car," she continued.

I was alert. I turned to her and asked, "Why are you telling me this—you know I know. We packed the stuff together. You know everything anyway."

She nodded assent but added, "Well, I just want to be sure in case something happens . . . if we . . ."

"You mean if we get separated for some reason?" I finished quickly.

"Yes, if we get separated, you have to know where everything is and what it is."

By then I was fighting hard against tears. I swallowed with difficulty and concentrated harder on the planes above. I wondered how many parents and kids were having this very same conversation today. She continued talking for a few moments and seemed to introduce a new and terrible possibility that I hadn't dared to think about all this time—life after death. Not eternal life after death—that was nothing new—but the possibility of *our* life, mine and E's, after *their* death.

During the war, the possibility of death was a constant. There were moments when I was sure we'd all be dead in a matter of seconds—especially during the horrific "shock and awe" period—but I



IRAQ: LIVE THROUGH THIS

LIFE IN IRAQ
THROUGH THE
EYES OF IRAQIS

compiled by Jeff Guntzel
photographs by Linda Panetta

always took it for granted that we'd all die together as a family. We'd either survive together or die together, it was always that simple. This new possibility was one I refused to think about.

As we sat there, she talking, and I retreating further and further into the nightmare of words, there was a colossal explosion that made the windows rattle and even seemed to shake the sturdy trees in the little garden. I jumped, relieved to hear that sound for the very first time in my life—it was the end of that morbid conversation and all I could think was, "saved by the bomb."

The streets were unsafe and the only people risking them were either the people seeking refuge in other areas or the looters who began to descend on homes, schools, universities, museums, and governmental buildings and institutions like a group of vultures on the carcass of a freshly dead lion.

We spent the rest of the day listening to the battery-powered radio and trying to figure out what was happening around us. We heard stories from the neighbors about a massacre in A'adhamiya—the Americans were shooting right and left, deaths and looting in the south.

Day faded into night . . . the longest day of my life. The day we sensed that the struggle in Baghdad was over and the fear of war was nothing compared to the new fear we were currently facing. It was the day I saw my first American tank roll grotesquely down the streets of Baghdad—through a residential neighborhood.

And that was April 9, 2003 for me and millions of others. There are thousands who weren't so lucky—they lost loved ones on April 9 to guns, and tanks, and Apaches. Now the current Governing Council want us to remember April 9 fondly and hail it as our "National Day," a day of victory. But whose victory? And whose nation?

One of Those Countries Sunday, April 11, 2004

We've taken to sleeping in the living room again. We put up the heavy drapes the day before yesterday and E and I re-taped the windows looking out into the garden. This time I made them use the clear tape so that the view wouldn't be marred with long, brown strips of tape. We sleep in the living room because it is the safest room in the house and the only room that will hold the whole family comfortably.

The preparations for sleep begin at around 10 p.m. on days when we have electricity and somewhat earlier on dark nights. E and I have to drag out the mats, blankets and pillows and arrange them creatively on the floor so that everyone is as far away from the windows as possible without actually being crowded.

Baghdad is calm and relatively quiet if you don't count the frequent explosions. Actually, when we don't hear explosions, it gets a bit worrying. I know that sounds strange but it's like this: You know how you see someone holding a rifle or gun and aiming at something, ready to fire? You cringe and tense up while waiting for the gunshot and keep thinking, "It's coming, it's coming . . ." That's how it feels on a morning without explosions. Somehow, you just *know* there are going to be explosions, it's only a matter of time. Hearing them is a relief. You can loosen up after they occur and hope that they'll be the last of the day.

The hostage situations are a mess. I watch television and it feels like I'm watching another country. All I can think is, "We've

become one of *those* countries"—you know, the ones where hostages are taken on a daily basis and governments warn their civilians against visiting or entering the country. It's especially sad because even during those long years during the sanctions and in between wars and bombings there were never any attacks on foreigners. Iraqis are hospitable, friendly people who always used to treat foreigners with care. Now everyone is treated like a potential enemy.

The case of the Japanese hostages is especially sad—I'm so sorry for their families and friends specifically, and the Japanese people in general. We keep hearing conflicting reports about their situation. This morning I heard that the kidnappers agreed to free them but someone else told me that it was just a rumor. It's heart-breaking to see them on television and I wish there was something that could be done. Will the Japanese government pull out the troops? Not likely. Three people won't matter to them. I hope they come out of this alive and well and I hope they don't hold a grudge against Iraqis. Japan became one of "them" when they decided to send over troops and these are the consequences. I'm so sorry. In spite of the fact that dozens of Iraqis are abducted and killed each day, I'm really sorry.

Media and Falluja Wednesday, April 14, 2004

There has been a lot of criticism about the way Al-Arabia and Al-Jazeera were covering the riots and fighting in Fallujah and the south this last week. Some American spokesman for the military was ranting about the "spread of anti-Americanism" through networks like those.

Actually, both networks did a *phenomenal* job of covering the attacks on Fallujah and the southern provinces. Al-Jazeera had their reporter literally embedded in the middle of the chaos—and I don't mean the lame "embedded" type of thing Western journalists had going at the beginning of the war—you know: embedded in the Green Zone and embedded in Kuwait. Ahmed Mansur, I believe his name was, was actually standing there, in the middle of the bombing, shouting to be heard over the F-16s and helicopters blasting away at houses and buildings. It brought back the days of "shock and awe."

I know it bothers the CPA terribly to have the corpses of dead Iraqis shown on television. They would love for Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabia to follow Al-Hurra's example and show endless interviews with pro-occupation Iraqis living abroad and speaking in stilted Arabic. These interviews, of course, are interspersed with translated documentaries on the many marvels of Hollywood. And while I, personally, am very interested in the custom leather interiors of the latest Audi, I couldn't seem to draw myself away from Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabia while 700+ Iraqis were being killed.

To lessen the feelings of anti-Americanism, might I make a few suggestions? Stop the collective punishment. When Mark Kimmitt stutters through a press conference babbling about "precision weapons" and "military targets" in Fallujah, who is he kidding? Are houses, shops, and mosques now military targets?

What I'm trying to say is that we don't need news networks to make us angry or frustrated. All you need to do is talk to one of the Fallujah refugees making their way tentatively into Baghdad; look at the tear-stained faces, the eyes glazed over with something like shock. In our neighborhood alone there are at least four families



(opposite page) Boy at the Hai Tarik Shiite Community, Baghdad. (this page, clockwise) Karate lessons at the Magreb Youth Art Center; Children at the Al Huda Squatters Encampment. More than 1,000 people have made a home in the bombed wreckage of a former training center for Saddam Hussein's security forces; Girl at a demonstration outside the Coalition Provisional Authority; Boys playing on wreckage at the Al Huda Squatters Encampment.

"As we sat there, she talking, and I retreating further and further into the nightmare of words, there was a colossal explosion that made the windows rattle and even seemed to shake the sturdy trees in the little garden."

from Fallujah who have come to stay with family and friends in Baghdad. The stories they tell are terrible and grim and it's hard to believe that they've gone through so much.

I think Western news networks are far too tame. They show the Hollywood version of war—strong troops in uniform, hostile Iraqis being captured and made to face "justice" and the White House turkey posing with the Thanksgiving turkey—which is just fine, but what about the destruction that comes with war and occupation? What about the death? I don't mean just the images of dead Iraqis scattered all over, but dead Americans too. People should *have* to see those images. Why is it not OK to show dead Iraqis and American troops in Iraq, but it's fine to show the catastrophe of September 11 over and over again? I wish every person who e-mails me supporting the war, safe behind their computer, secure in their narrow mind and fixed views, could actually come and experience the war live. I wish they could spend just 24 hours in Baghdad today and hear Mark Kimmett talk about the death of 700 "insurgents" like it was a proud day for Americans everywhere.

Still, when I hear talk about "anti-Americanism" it angers me. Why does America identify itself with its military and government? Why does being anti-Bush and anti-occupation have to mean that

a person is anti-American? We watch American movies, listen to everything from Britney Spears to Nirvana, and refer to every single brown, fizzy drink as "Pepsi."

I hate American foreign policy and its constant meddling in the region. I hate American tanks in Baghdad and American soldiers on our streets and in our homes on occasion. Why does that mean that I hate America and Americans? Are tanks, troops and violence the only face of America? If the Pentagon, Department of Defense, and Condi Rice are "America," then yes—I hate America.

I Just Can't Explain Friday, April 23, 2004

I haven't written for the last week or so because I simply haven't felt like it. It sometimes feels like homework and I actually end up feeling guilty when I don't write. I avoid looking at the computer because it sometimes seems to look back at me rebukingly, wondering why I haven't been blogging or at least checking my e-mails. The truth is that there's so much going on around us that I can't even begin to try to summarize it into a meager blog. The current situation in the south and the supposed truce in Fallujah has me worried and angry all at once. There's nothing that can describe the current feeling in the air. It's like that Morrissey song:

Now my heart is full
Now my heart is full
And I just can't explain
So I won't even try to

There's a truce sort of going on in Fallujah but the problem is that we still hear of people being killed on both sides and areas being bombed in the city; the refugees are still in Baghdad and neighboring cities. We heard that, for a couple of days, the troops were letting in around 80 families a day—now that number seems to have dwindled to 15 families a day. The refugees seem anxious to get back to their homes and many of them left behind family members in the city.

The situation in the south, especially Karbala, is also worrisome. There are stories of clashes between troops and the Al-Sadr's militia. There have also been explosions in Basra and Baghdad, but they hardly register on the news anymore. Iraqis take it in stride along with dust storms, blackouts, and mosquitoes. It has become a part of life and one simply has to find away to live around it, just as one finds a way around American road blocks and concrete walls that are rising ever higher.

There is a sort of muggy, heavy heat lately. It's not the usual dry Iraqi heat that we're accustomed to; it's more of a moist, clammy heat that feels almost solid. The electrical situation is still quite bad in many areas. We're on a schedule of three hours of electricity and then three hours of darkness. While it was tolerable during the cool winter months, the hellish summer months promise to be torture.

Those Pictures Friday, April 30, 2004

The pictures are horrific. I felt a multitude of things as I saw them, the most prominent feeling was rage, of course. I had this incredible desire to break something—like that would make things somehow better or ease the anger and humiliation. We've been hearing terrible stories about Abu Ghraib Prison in Baghdad for a while now, but those pictures somehow spoke like no words could.

Seeing those naked, helpless, hooded men was like being slapped in the face with an ice-cold hand. I felt ashamed looking at them—like I was seeing something I shouldn't be seeing. All I could think was, "I might know one of those faceless men." I might have passed him in the street or worked with him. I might have bought groceries from one of them or sat through a lecture they gave in college. Any of them might be a teacher, gas station attendant, or engineer. Any one of them might be a father or grandfather. Each and every one of them is a son and possibly a brother. And people wonder at what happened in Fallujah a few weeks ago when those Americans were killed and dragged through the streets.

All anyone can talk about today are those pictures . . . those terrible pictures. There is so much rage and frustration. I know the dozens of e-mails I'm going to get claiming that this is an "isolated incident" and that they are "ashamed of the people who did this." But does it matter? What about those people in Abu Ghraib? What about their families and the lives that have been forever damaged by their experience there? I know the messages that I'm going to get, the ones that say, "But this happened under Saddam," like somehow, that makes what happens now OK. Like whatever was

suffered in the past should make any mass graves, detentions, and torture only minor inconveniences now.

And you know what? You won't hear half of the atrocities and stories because Iraqis are proud, indignant people and sexual abuse is not a subject anyone is willing to come forward with. The atrocities in Abu Ghraib and other places will be hidden away and buried under all the other dirt the occupation brought with it.

It's beyond depressing and humiliating. My blood boils at the thought of what must be happening to the female prisoners. To see those smiling soldiers with the Iraqi prisoners is horrible. I hope they are made to suffer, but somehow I know they won't be punished. They'll be discharged from the army, at best, and made to go back home and join families and cronies who will drink to the pictures and the way "America's finest" treated those "Dumb I-raki terrorists."

Where is the Governing Council? Where are they hiding now?

I want something done about this and I want it done publicly. I want those horrible soldiers who were responsible for this to be publicly punished and humiliated. I want them to be condemned and identified as the horrible people they are. I want their children and their children's children to carry on the story of what was done for a long time—as long as those prisoners will carry along with them the humiliation and pain of what was done and as long as the memory of those pictures remains in Iraqi hearts and minds.

Just Go Friday, May 07, 2004

People are seething with anger—the pictures of Abu Ghraib and the Brits in Basrah are everywhere. Every newspaper you pick up in Baghdad has pictures of some American or British atrocity or another.

Everyone knew this was happening in Abu Ghraib and other places; seeing the pictures simply made it all the more real and tangible somehow. American and British politicians have the audacity to come on television with words like, "True, the people in Abu Ghraib are criminals, but . . ." Everyone here in Iraq knows that there are *thousands* of innocent people detained. Some were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, while others were detained "under suspicion." In the New Iraq, it's "guilty until proven innocent by some miracle of God."

People are so angry. There's no way to explain the reactions—even pro-occupation Iraqis find themselves silenced by this latest horror.

There was a time when people here felt sorry for the troops. No matter what one's attitude was towards the occupation, there were moments of pity towards the troops, regardless of their nationality. We would see them suffering the Iraqi sun, obviously wishing they were somewhere else, and somehow that vulnerability made them seem less monstrous and more human. That time has passed. People look at troops now and see the pictures of Abu Ghraib and we burn with shame and anger and frustration at not being able to do something.

I'm avoiding the Internet because it feels like the pictures are somehow available on every site I visit. I'm torn between wishing they weren't there and feeling, somehow, that it's important that the whole world sees them. The thing, I guess, that bothers me most is that the children can see it all. How do you explain the face of the American soldier leering over the faceless, naked bodies to a



(clockwise) Climbing on wreckage at the Al Huda Squatters Encampment; a US soldier talks to demonstrators outside the CPA; a woman sits at Al Huda; a boy outside his home at Al Huda.

“Seeing those naked, helpless, hooded men was like being slapped in the face with an ice-cold hand. I felt ashamed looking at them—like I was seeing something I shouldn’t be seeing. All I could think was, “I might know one of those faceless men.””

child? How do you explain the sick, twisted minds? How do you explain what is happening to a seven-year-old?

There have been demonstrations in Baghdad and other places. There was a large demonstration outside of the Abu Ghraib prison itself. The families of some of the inmates of the prison were out there protesting the detentions and the atrocities, faces streaked with tears of rage and brows furrowed with anxiety. Each and every one of those people was wondering what their loved ones had suffered inside the walls of the hell.

And through all this, Bush gives his repulsive speeches. He makes an appearance on Arabic TV channels looking sheepish and attempting to look sincere, babbling on about how this “incident” wasn’t representative of the American people or even the army, regardless of the fact that it’s been going on for so long. He asks Iraqis to not let these pictures reflect on their attitude towards the American people, and yet when the bodies were dragged through the streets of Fallujah, the American troops took it upon themselves to punish the whole city.

He’s claiming it’s a “stain on our country’s honor.” I think not. The stain on your country’s honor, Bush dear, was the one on the infamous blue dress that made headlines while Clinton was in the White House. This isn’t a “stain,” this is a *catastrophe*. Your credibility was gone

the moment you stepped into Iraq and couldn’t find the WMDs.

All I can think about is the universal outrage when the former government showed pictures of American POWs on television looking frightened and unsure about their fate. I remember the outcries from American citizens, claiming that Iraqis were animals for showing “America’s finest” fully clothed and unharmed. So what does this make Americans now?

We heard about it all. We heard stories since the very beginning of the occupation—stories about prisoners being made to sit for several hours on their knees, being deprived of sleep for days at a time by being splashed with cold water, or kicked and slapped, about the infamous “red rooms” where prisoners are kept for prolonged periods of time, about the rape, the degradations, the emotional and physical torture—and there were moments when I actually wanted to believe that what we heard was exaggerated. I realize now that it was only a small fragment of the truth. There is nothing that is going to make this better.

Nothing.

I don’t understand the “shock” Americans claim to feel at the lurid pictures. You’ve seen the troops break down doors and terrify women and children—curse, scream, push, pull and throw peo-

ple to the ground with a boot over their head. You've seen troops shoot civilians in cold blood. You've seen them bomb cities and towns. You've seen them burn cars and humans using tanks and helicopters. Is this latest debacle so very shocking or appalling?

I sometimes get e-mails asking me to propose solutions or make suggestions. Fine. Today's lesson: don't rape, don't torture, don't kill and get out while you can—while it still looks like you have a choice. Chaos? Civil war? Bloodshed? We'll take our chances—just take your puppets, your tanks, your smart weapons, your dumb politicians, your lies, your empty promises, your rapists, your sadistic torturers and go.

Last Few Days Saturday, May 15, 2004

That video of Nick Berg is beyond horrible. I can hardly believe it happened. His family must be devastated and I can't even imagine what they must have felt. With all of this going on—first Abu Ghraib and now this—I haven't felt like writing anything.

I was sick to my stomach when I first saw the video on some news channel and stood petrified, watching the screen and praying that they wouldn't show it whole because, for some reason, I couldn't take my eyes off of it. I feel horrible. Was I shocked? Was I surprised? Hardly. We've been expecting this since the first pictures of the torture of Iraqi prisoners broke out. There's a certain rage in many people that is frightening. There's a certain hunger and need for revenge that lame apologies from Bush and surprise visits from Rumsfeld won't appease.

I think beheading was the chosen method of execution because the group wanted to shock Americans and Westerners in the worst possible way. The torturers at Abu Ghraib and other prisons chose sexual degradation because they knew that nothing would hurt and appall Iraqis and Muslims more than those horrible, sadistic acts. To Iraqis, death is infinitely better than being raped or sexually abused. There are things worse than death itself and those pictures portrayed them.

Foreigners in Iraq are being very, very careful—and with good reason. Many of the companies have pulled out their staff and are asking the remaining workers and contractors to be extra careful and as inconspicuous as possible.

...

The end-of-the-year examinations have started in most schools. The school administrations are trying to get them over with as soon as humanly possible. It's already unbearably hot and dusty and the heat gets worse as summer progresses. Last year examinations were held in June and July and children were fainting in the summer heat in schools with no electricity. We're hoping to avoid that this year.

We're all donating money to the school in the area so they can remain hooked up to the local power generator during the day while the kids are being tested. You can see them in the streets and trapped behind car windows looking flushed and wilted. We're all praying that they'll be able to finish the year without anything drastic happening—well, relatively drastic.

The air feels stale and stagnant in Baghdad lately. There's disappointment and exhaustion and a certain resignation to the anger and fear that seem to have taken over during recent weeks.

The Roof Tuesday, June 01, 2004

Hot. It's hot, hot, hot, hot.

The weather is almost stifling now. The air is heavy and dry with heat. By early noon, it's almost too hot to go outside. For every two hours of electricity, we have four hours of no electricity in our area—and several other areas. The problem now is that many generators are starting to break down due to constant use and the bad quality of the fuel. It's a big problem and it promises to grow as the summer progresses.

I have spent the last two days ruminating the political situation and washing the roof. While the two activities are very different, they do share one thing in common: the roof and the political situation are both a mess.

The roof of an Iraqi home is a sacred place. As much planning goes into it as almost anything else. The roofs are flat and often surrounded by a low wall on which one can lean and look out into the city. During this last year, a certain sort of special bond has formed between your typical Iraqi and the roof of his or her home. We run out to the roof to see where the smoke is coming from after an explosion; we gather on the roof to watch the helicopters flying overhead; we reluctantly drag ourselves out to the roof to fill the water tanks when the water is low; we hang clothes to dry on the clotheslines strung out haphazardly across the roof; we sleep on the roof during the endless, powerless nights.

That last one, sleeping on the roof, was a tradition my parents once fondly talked about. They used to tell us endless stories about how, as children, they used to put out mats and low beds on the roof to sleep. There were no air-conditioners back then, sometimes not even ceiling fans. People had to be content with the hot Baghdad air and the energetic Baghdad mosquitoes. Now my parents get to relive their childhood memories like never before because we've gone back a good 50 years. It's impossible to sleep inside the house while the electricity is off. The darkness and heat descend upon you like a heavy black cloak and the mosquitoes suddenly make a rush for any exposed bits of skin.

And so Riverbend and E were sent to the roof a few days ago to do some cleaning.

We agreed to begin the cleaning process at dusk, half an hour after the harsh sun began its trip west. I met E up on the roof, he holding a pail of luke-warm water and me armed with a broom and mop. The roof, upon examination, was a disaster; dust *everywhere*. We had several dust storms these last few weeks and all the particles of dust that were swirling around Baghdad seemed to have agreed to rendezvous upon our roof.

It took almost two hours, 600 sneezes, and around 15 buckets of water, but the roof is finally ready to sleep on. In an hour, we will drag out the mattresses and pillows. We were supposed to be out there, asleep, a couple of hours ago but the electricity came back on suddenly and I refuse to leave the computer. ☺

Edited for clarity and length by Jeff Guntzel and Daniel Sinker.

The Blogs of War

Other electronic voices from within Iraq. by Jeff Guntzel

Blog entries presented with punctuation and grammar unedited.

These days news from Iraq is like oxygen: It's just there. While an endless parade of eager Western journalists snakes daily towards the latest suicide attack or press conference, the story of ordinary lives lived in extraordinary conditions is passed up.

Enter a dedicated handful of computer-savvy Iraqis who have discovered, sometimes inadvertently, the power of the blog.

The first Iraqi blog was posted by an openly-gay architect in Baghdad who called himself "Salam Pax." When Pax started his blog, "Where is Raed?" in the summer of 2002 (the same year modems were legalized in the home by Saddam Hussein), there was no hint of the wartime diary that would make him an Internet celebrity. In fact, he described the blog as being "all about some guy who risked his nuts to tell us he's a pervert."

It wasn't long before Pax was telling the world much more than that. Hussein was a "nutcase," he wrote, and his equally-ruthless playboy son was "the walking-talking freakshow."

Now he was in dangerous—even deadly—territory. Saddam's government blocked the blog and searched in vain for its author. Unthwarted, and with an American attack all but inevitable, he kept writing.

By the time bombs fell on Baghdad, "Where is Raed?" was the most linked-to diary on the web. A London newspaper gave him an online column. There was a book. Inspired, other blogs emerged.

Faiza is the mother behind the "A Family in Baghdad" blog, which is maintained by Faiza and her three sons.

In June 2004, Faiza wrote about a newly painted curb in her neighborhood. She posted two pictures of the yellow and white curb. *Two*. She wanted the world to see the curb:

JUST IMAGINE HOW FRUSTRATING OUR LIVES ARE, MAKING US FEEL HAPPY BY THE MERE SIGHT OF PAINTED CURBS IN THE STREET. IT IS A VERY SMALL MATTER, BUT TO OUR LIVES, OUR MANY DISAPPOINTMENTS, WE FIND IT A GOOD START TO THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS WE HOPE WILL GROW . . . SO THAT WE COULD REBUILD OUR CITIES, OUR LIVES, AND OUR SOULS . . . ALL OVER AGAIN.

Faiza's son Majid, who has his own blog, "Me vs. mysElF," talks about joining the resistance, though the thoughts—on his blog at least—are often fleeting:

WASN'T IT ME WHO ALWAYS DREAMED OF STUDYING AT MIT? WHY DID I LOSE MY DREAMS? WHAT PUSHES ME NOW? WHAT IS THE MOTIVE FOR ME TO GO ON WITH MY LIFE? WHY DON'T I JUST JOIN MY OTHER SCHOOLMATES WHO DROPPED OUT THE SCHOOL AND JOINED THE ARMED RESISTANCE?

Majid is 17 years old and angry. But his sense of beauty—and his sense of humor—is firmly intact. At the end of finals, his high school education almost complete, he offered up this reflection to his readers:

I STARTED TO HAVE A FLASH BACK OF EVERY SPECIAL MOMENT IN MY LIFE, THE SWEET AND THE BITTER MOMENTS...THE 1ST WORDS I READ IN A SCHOOL BOOK, 12 YEARS AGO, DAR, DOOR [HOUSE, HOUSES, THE 1ST TWO WORDS IN THE IRAQI 1ST GRADE READING BOOK] . . . I STILL REMEMBER THEIR FONT, I STILL HEAR THE ECHO OF MISS SABEEHA'S VOICE IN MY EAR, WHEN SHE WAS PRONOUNCING THE WORDS CAREFULLY IN MY READING BOOK.

I CAN NEVER FORGET THE 1ST FRIEND I HAD IN MY LIFE AND OUR FRIENDSHIP-FOREVER OATH...I WOULD NEVER FORGET THE EXCITEMENT OF MISS AWATIF [MY 3RD GRADE MATH TEACHER] TO LISTEN TO ME TELLING HER THE 1ST 10 INTEGER SQUARE ROOTS. I FELT I WAS THE KING OF THE WORLD.

AS I STARTED TO RESTORE MY MEMORIES, I FELT ALL THOSE FEELINGS I THOUGHT I WOULD NEVER REMEMBER...MY SHYNESS TO STAND BEFORE THE PUPILS TO READ MY FAVORITE POEMS, MY PRIDE WHEN I WAS ELECTED "THE IDEAL PUPIL" OF 6TH GRADE, THE FIRST TIME I KNEW WHAT IS TO BE IN LOVE . . . I COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT LIFE WAS MOVING THAT FAST, I HAVE [ALMOST] FINISHED THE MOST IMPORTANT PERIOD OF MY LIFE.

IT SEEMED THAT I WAS CARRIED AWAY BY MY FEELINGS; I DIDN'T PAY ATTENTION TO THE TRAFFIC JAM THIS TIME, I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THE NOISE OF THE US HELICOPTERS RAPING THE SILENCE OF OUR SKIES.

I COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT I ACTUALLY FORGOT THE HATRED WE—STUDENTS— FELT AGAINST OUR TEACHERS AS THEY WERE PUSHING US TO BECOME BA'ATHISTS. I STILL MEET THE SAME FACES EVERYDAY . . . IN THE SCHOOL, IN THE STREET, AT WORK . . . EVERYWHERE.

I THINK I JUST WOKE UP . . . WITH A DESPAIRED SCREAM OF "WHAT THE HELL HAS HAPPENED HERE?"

NOW I HAVE A NEW SCHEDULE . . .

JUNE 16, END OF FINALS, SENIOR YEAR . . . I'M OUTTA HIGH SCHOOL.

JUNE 17, KICK BREMER'S ASS, FREE THE WORLD. HEEHAW.

It sounds like any teenage kids journal, except for the war part. It's true in many Iraqi blogs:

Much of the time the reader forgets they're being written from a war zone. Then comes a post like this one, from a blog called, "The Sun of Iraq":

TO ALL MY FRIENDS AND ALL WHOM READ MY WORDS IN THE WORLD, I'M SORRY I WAS BELATED...I'M SURE YOU ARE HEARING ABOUT THE SUICIDAL ATTACK IN ONE OF THE HOTELS (AL-KARADA CITY) BAGHDAD.

IT WAS A VERY HURTFUL ACCIDENT AND THERE IS SOME THING ELSE, I LIVE NEAR THAT HOTEL, IT WAS A TERRIBLE ATTACK BY TERRORIST, YOU CAN NOT IMAGINE THAT, I WAS . . . CHANGING MY CLOTHES . . . TO TRAVEL TO THE NORTH OF IRAQ. I WANT TO VISIT MY FRIENDS . . . AND SUDDENLY I HEARD THE VOICE OF A BIG EXPLOSION WITH ACUTE BLOW THAT HAD BROKEN ALL THE WINDOWS OF MY HOUSE, THE GLASSES PENETRATED ALL THE PARTS OF MY BODY, AT THAT TIME I WERE UNCONSCIOUSNESS, BUT AFTER [TWO] DAYS I FOUND MYSELF IN ONE OF BAGHDAD'S HOSPITALS AND CAN'T MOVING.

NOW MY HEALTH IS BETTER, SO I HAVE MADE A DECISION TO WRITE THIS . . . TO LET YOU KNOW WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND I WILL PROMISE ALL MY FRIENDS TO WRITE MORE AND MORE. I HOPE TO MEET YOU AGAIN IN MY WEB SITE AND BY E-MAILS.

There are also bloggers in Iraq who look more to the sunny side. "Iraq the Model" is one:

IT'S EASY FOR ANYONE TO HATE, CRITICIZE AND COMPLAIN OF THE BAD SITUATIONS, BUT IT'S DIFFICULT TO LOVE AND WORK TO OVERCOME THE HARDSHIPS. I'VE BEEN ACCUSED MANY TIMES OF BEING OVER OPTIMISTIC AND UNREALISTIC WHILE MY COUNTRY IS PASSING THROUGH A CRITICAL PERIOD AND THE FUTURE OF THE REGION AND THE WORLD IS GOING TO BE AFFECTED BY THE RESULT OF THIS WAR.

I KNOW THIS WELL AND I FEEL IT EVERYDAY WHEN I DEAL WITH PEOPLE; I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS AND I CAN SEE THE DANGERS AND THE COMING DIFFICULTIES, BUT IS THIS MY DUTY?!

THE POINT HERE IS THAT I'M TRYING TO WORK HARD TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES. I'M NOT GOING TO BLAME OTHERS ALL THE TIME OR PUT THE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR WHAT HAPPENS ON OTHERS AS THIS WILL NOT PUSH THE PROGRESS FORWARDS, INSTEAD, I'M TRYING TO LOOK THROUGH THE SMOKE OF THE BATTLE TO SEE TOMORROW'S IRAQ.

Of course, Iraq's native bloggers have no more a sense of Iraq's future than the neo-conservative schemers who dreamt up the war.

Iraq's bloggers are not the eloquent, practiced experts we so often lean on to help us understand the war, but they are *there*. They are eyes and ears on the ground as Iraq stumbles and tumbles—and sometimes explodes—into its uncertain future. ©

Sitting in his studio dressed in his trademark hat and sunglasses, Marcos Raya appears to be living in a fantastical limbo in time and space; a place caught between the extremes of antiquity and modernity; between the natural and the technological; between the holy and the marvelous; between poverty and wealth; between life and death itself.

His warehouse studio space on Halsted Street along the southern edge of Chicago's East Pilsen neighborhood, like his apartment just a few blocks farther north, is populated by mannequins turned into cyborgs, military and medical paraphernalia, leering clowns and all manner of paintings and installations that pay homage to the hard life that he has lived and the surreal technological/electronic frontier our society is now poised upon.

Raya got his start in the neighborhood as one of the old guard of political Latino muralists, blanketing the walls of the immigrant community with revolutionary icons and images. Today, the energy he once threw into radical politics and muralism is now channeled in different directions. But in many ways his role is the same: to provoke, to arouse, to question.

Raya first came to Pilsen in 1964 at age 16, after a childhood in Mexico traveling around with his musician father and an adolescence on scholarship at Lenox Preparatory School, an elite arts high school in Massachusetts. Pilsen is a traditional port-of-entry neighborhood on the city's near southwest side which was originally home to many Czech and Polish residents and is now mostly Mexican and Mexican-Americans.

"My mother got me a job washing dishes in a restaurant on 18th Street," he notes. "It was so scary. It was really rough at the time, mostly Chicanos from Texas. The juke box would play all Tex-Mex music. I worked for two weeks and didn't even go to pick up my check at the end."

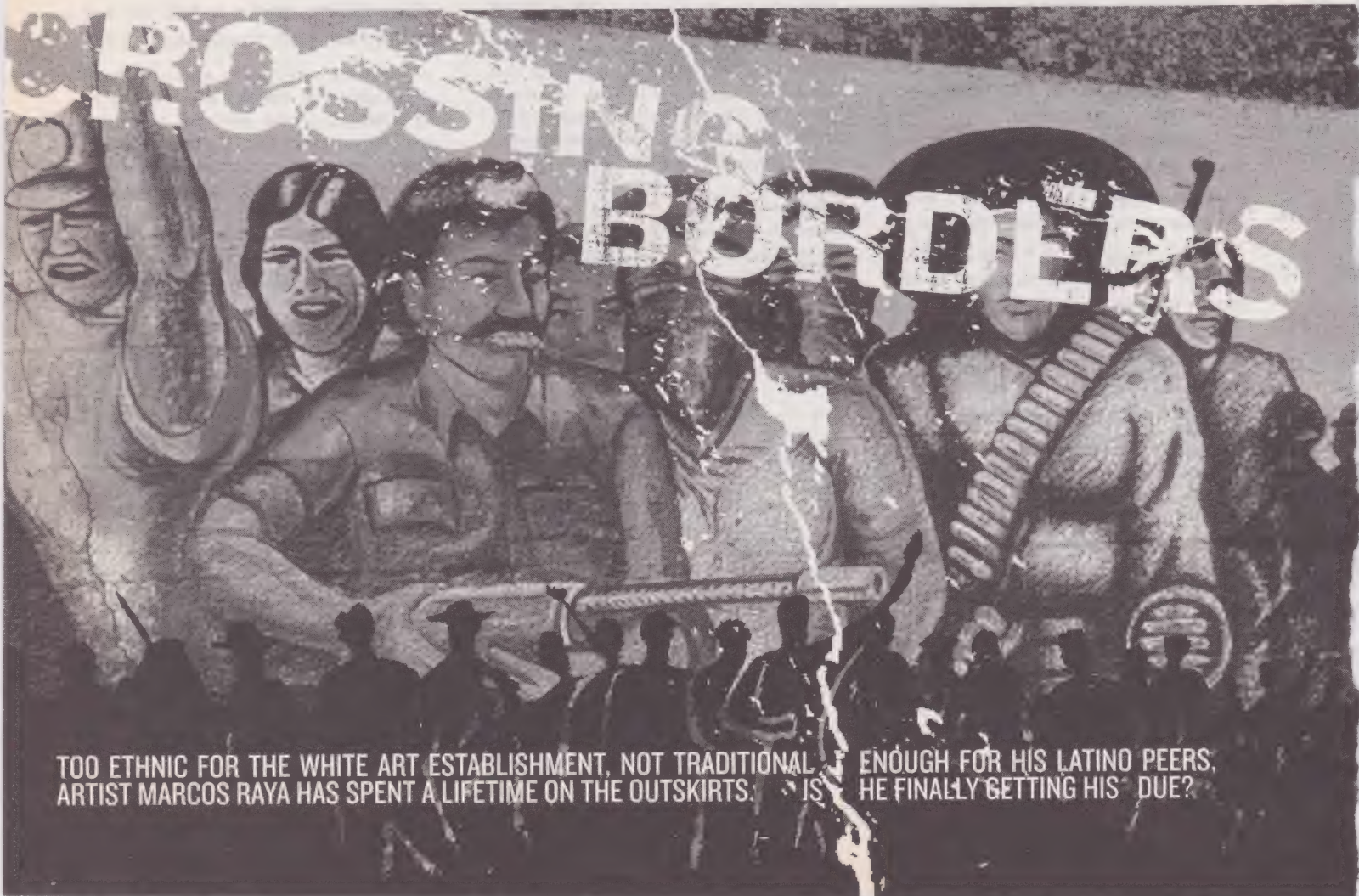
Raya was always an artist, and he prides himself on the fact that he has worked only as an artist, save for a few short stints in factories which lasted only long enough to provide more fodder for works like "RSI 2000" (for Repetitive Stress Injury), a majestic and chilling photo collage showing a weary and injured American worker wearing a Statue of Liberty crown set against Pilsen's equally weary industrial skyline.

"I can't work a nine-to-five job, or an assembly-line job—I'd go crazy," he says.

When he was old enough, Raya left Chicago for New York and other parts of the country. "I was in Greenwich Village in 1967 and 1968, but I never felt part of that scene," he says. "I felt very working class. Even though I had my hair like Bob Dylan, I didn't fit in."

Raya returned to Chicago and gravitated back to Pilsen. At the time the neighborhood was a major international drug-dealing hub. You either profited off the trade or became a victim of its products—or both.

"It was one of the underground empires of drug-trafficking; it was like Colombia in the 1970s," he says. "Like a lot of the poor neighborhoods, it was just flooded with drugs. It was the post-civil



TOO ETHNIC FOR THE WHITE ART ESTABLISHMENT, NOT TRADITIONAL ENOUGH FOR HIS LATINO PEERS, ARTIST MARCOS RAYA HAS SPENT A LIFETIME ON THE OUTSKIRTS. IS HE FINALLY GETTING HIS DUE?

rights era and a lot of kids ended up selling drugs. I saw a lot of young people die."

Raya lived and worked as an artist-in-residence at Casa Aztlan, the radical, mural-covered local community center. "We were trying to politicize the youth," he says.

Raya soon fell into the world of alcohol and street life himself, entering a period he calls "The Dog Years" that lasted through most of the 1970s and 1980s. He was in and out of the hospital and watched his drinking buddies die one by one.

"I was the lumpen proletarian, a bohemian artist just living the boho life," he says. "There was a sense of just trying to survive."

The Dog Years are memorialized in his paintings, including a series of technicolor spaniels slouched on the street, sporting sunglasses, a paunch and an air of hopeless cool. These are self-portraits, as is the striking painting called "3 a.m." showing a man passed out in a Pilsen apartment with a gun in his hand. But Raya chose to leave himself out of his signature painting about those years, "Los Hijos de la Mala Vida," an urban Last Supper-type work showing his friends and a stray dog posed on 18th Street with bottles and drunken half-smiles. Now all of them are dead, even the dog.

But Raya is alive. Very much alive.

Sitting at a table in his studio next to books about cyborgs, philosophy, and the CIA, painstakingly gluing metal pins to a plastic skull for an installation piece, he talks about how much fun he is having these days. About how he is loving what he is doing, the people he is meeting, and the art he is creating.

"Los Hijos de la Mala Vida" took me 20 years to finish. When I finished it, I not only was getting tired of that life but I was starting to get some recognition," he notes.

He punctuates long periods of work with evenings studying in a new bookstore up the street—part of the redevelopment of the gentrifying neighborhood—or days scavenging materials in thrift shops and military surplus stores. Raya is finally becoming well-known for the art he kept creating even throughout the Dog Years, with high-profile local and national shows under his belt and pieces selling for thousands of dollars.

It is fitting that Raya lives on Halsted Street in East Pilsen—clearly demarcated politically and geographically from less-gentrified, angrier West Pilsen—and it is especially fitting that his studio is on the very southern edge of East Pilsen, between the increasingly upscale galleries and workspaces that line Halsted Street to the north and the still-working class, industrial area to the south. He seems to not quite fit in anywhere, and he's proud of that.

Raya has a chronic love-hate relationship with Pilsen—he bitterly criticizes what he describes as the neighborhood's (mainly West Pilsen) refusal to let go of the social realist style, which he sees as a thing of the past, and its reluctance its resistance to inter-racial cooperation and integration. Part of the reason for the racial divisions and isolationism that Raya criticizes in Pilsen is that the neighborhood has long been involved in a critical and seemingly endless battle against gentrification.

"The idea of community has disappeared in cities because of globalization," he says.

During his first decades in Pilsen, Raya was part of the artistic resistance movement, painting the sprawling murals of Latin American guerrillas and revolutionaries like the "Fallen Dictators" piece along a railroad viaduct at 18th Street and Western. The paint on that mural, showing Che and other figures standing proudly above the prone body of Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, is chipping and fading away.

Raya's involvement in the orthodox leftist artistic and activist movements in Pilsen are likewise a thing of the past.



"Now the people of my generation are writing more proposals than doing great murals," he says. "The murals have become infantile and mainstream. They're working for the city so they can't do religion, politics or sex. That money slowed them down—that's what money can do to you."

Though it doesn't pay homage to revolutionary or leftist icons, Raya's work is still political. He often combines the political with the absurd or with pop culture, as he does with a series of old encyclopedia images of US presidents altered to become clowns.

"The way they're dressed they look like clowns already," he laughs.

He also has a piece showing Ronald Reagan as the Lone Ranger and J. Edgar Hoover in drag, surrounded by toy guns. "My work's always going to be political," he adds. "I just want to be sure of what kind of political art I'm doing. In art you can't help but look at the inherent contradictions in capitalism."

Then there is the politics of technology, of transcending the human condition, as embodied in the meticulous renditions of medical equipment, including one he is particularly fascinated with—a real-life contraption which can do laser surgery remotely from as far away as Japan, called "telesurgery." There is also the "Technomuralist," a half-clothed woman with various machines hooked up to her body who creates brilliant murals just by thinking.

Irreverently-treated Catholic icons permeate many of his pieces—his July exhibition at the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Pilsen featured an altar to Santo Nino, Saint of Criminals, with a gaudy red velvet Christ figure and virgins in sunglasses.

"I always had a problem with Catholic propaganda because you have all these white saints," he notes.

His piece "Our Lady of the Millenium" is a modern take on the ever-present Virgin of Guadalupe, portraying her as a cyborg

in heels and a mini-skirt power suit framed by a spiky corona.

His work also pays homage to Dadaism and surrealism—his alter-ego is "Man Raya"—and to indigenous cultures and traditions of Latin America.

He takes great pride in his Mexican heritage, but sees it as something that empowers him to be whomever he chooses to be, rather than catering to colonialism and tokenism within the white art world.

"Once you arrive at a certain level there are all these tricks set up by art dealers," he says. "Call it institutional racism. Most museums have this very colonial perspective: Native American, Indian art, all that is in the basement, and all that art is stolen! For me, Mexico is part of my family and culture. Mexico had the first revolution, Mexico has one of the oldest cuisines in the world. Because I was born there, I was taught to love all the children of the world; that my possibilities as an individual would be endless; that I could reach the heavens."

Raya is currently working with other authors and artists on a book about his life and work tentatively titled *Diagnosis: Hysterical Lucidity*. Working on the book and talking to an increasing numbers of journalists as his work gets more and more well-known forces him to keep rehashing his life and ruminating on its meaning. Talking about the "Dog Years" makes him exhausted, almost like a massage releasing toxins into the body in order to release them.

In many ways his life is completely different today, but in many ways it hasn't changed. The same can be said about Pilsen itself, the neighborhood that is so in his blood and yet at times so exasperating and foreign to him.

"For some reason I can't see myself anywhere else," he says. ©

"NOW THE PEOPLE OF MY GENERATION
DOING GREAT MURALS," HE SAYS. "THE
STREAM. THEY'RE WORKING FOR THE CITY
THAT MONEY SLOWED THEM DOWN—

ARE WRITING MORE PROPOSALS THAN
MURALS HAVE BECOME INFANTILE AND MAIN-
SO THEY CAN'T DO RELIGION, POLITICS OR SEX.
THAT'S WHAT MONEY CAN DO TO YOU."





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The glass doors slide open, breaking apart like hands after they complete a prayer, only to return to a locked position within a few seconds. Blue and white signs signify that we're at an Alta Bates hospital in Northern California. My parents both march forward as I hesitate behind them in a tired dance. I could probably count hospitals that I've visited, instead of sheep, while trying to fall asleep.

We move into an elevator, and it lifts us to our third floor destination. I touch my ribcage and trace its details. The doors of the elevator open and my mother and father look at the signs that hang on the edges of every other corner. I'm not sure if it's because of my current state of slow deterioration—my health is worse than it's ever been—but everyone seems to be quick in the movements they make. I feel like debris caught in the middle of a freeway.

My mother's voice is high and airy as she says our last name and states our purpose for being here. The whole time she's talking, her finger presses an intercom button located to the left of two steel doors. They open, we step inside, and they slam shut behind us with a bang. There are no handles on the inside. I touch my ribs once more and stare at the ground while my feet move. There are a few large holes that punctuate the stitching of my shoes, skateboarding has ruined them.

We turn left and maneuver through a communal room, where an old television stutters incomprehensible news. We then move quickly into a bright conference room with naked walls and bars on the windows. There are four of us—my mother and father, the administering nurse, and myself—but I only see two chairs. I touch my ribcage. I think I have enough strength to break one of the bones. If I could make a wish, I'd wish someone would take me home.

• • •

"Please sit down, Timothy," says the nurse.

I hate it when people call me Timothy. I might as well raise my hand and say, "present," like it's the first day of school. She's on a power trip that I've seen nurses on before. It's all part of her job, shooting full names at people and tensing with white-knuckled impatience. She has no clipboard, file, or any piece of information regarding who I am or why I'm here. She knows why I'm here. You could trace the skeletal system that holds me together. My skin is more like a blanket draped over the bones of my body. I'm a breathing version of a medical student's study sheet.

My father is inching into the adjoining room and my mother is in the doorway. During these visits, my mother always speaks for me while my eyes wash away along the tiles on the office floor.

I should probably mention that my father has never been to one of these appointments before. He's paid for the blood tests, the IVs, the MRIs and the EKG readings, and he still doesn't have an answer. Nothing is working. The fact that he's here makes me a little suspicious. As I start to get nervous and I move around a little.

"What's going on?" I ask the nurse and then my parents.

"Does Timothy know he's being admitted today?" She asks my mother. Waiting for an answer, she peers at me as if I'm in a cage.

"No, he doesn't," my mother answered.

"What is she talking about? I'm being admitted? You two are leaving me here?" It's not easy to compose one feeling when so many others are hanging onto it. I'm scared, angry, nervous, sick, and now, betrayed. In order to get me here they had to lie to me. I look at my mother in shock and see tears rolling down the sides of her cheeks like bullet trains.

The adults exchange words as it sinks in; I'm not leaving this place for a while. Warm streams of tears fall down my face.

They walk out of the room, leaving the door open behind them. In a minute the nurse comes back without my parents. "If you keep crying like that, your parents are going to leave you here and never pick you up," she says. I try to keep my composure, but I can't shut it off. "Just shut up," says the nurse defensively.

A few minutes later, their faces poke through the metal doorway, "Tim, we need to go now. They told us we need to leave, but we'll be back soon." The nurse pushes them away before a single "I love you" can get through.

• • •

I made a trade with the head-nurse who's on duty: my belt, shoelaces and the contents of my pockets—change, random papers with squiggles or one line drawings, and a guitar pick—for gauze and a light blue notebook.

• • •

Walt Whitman wrote, "The face is a lifeboat."

Open your mouth and stretch your lips inward, just enough so your teeth are sticking out. Now pretend you're hyperventilating. Suck huge breaths through your mouth for a period of about 45 seconds until the skin starts to dry around your lips and gums. As the moisture evaporates, they stick together. This action is similar to the changes that start to occur in your face as full-blown starvation sets in. Once it does, all faces look similar. Your features slide away from the body's highest point—one of the last places that has been holding out—and your secret is no longer under wraps.

Your teeth chatter on both the cold winter days and balmy spring nights. Everything is a cold kiss. Your teeth are like decayed knives jutting from root canals. Your cheekbones start to look like ladles. And your eyes are half-moons sinking into black voids.

• • •

My alarm clock, in the form of a nurse named Diana, wakes me up at five a.m. She tells me it's time to get up and chuckles a little at the sight of me waking with all my clothes still on. I wouldn't think that would stand out,—we're in a psychiatric ward after all. There was no room for a separate section for people with eating

TABLE 11-4

Disorder

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Bulimic disorder

Bipolar disorder

Major depression

Psychiatry

Disorder

Anorexia

Bulimia

Depression

Schizophrenia

Substance use

Tourette's

Witch

patients

rasmussen

Other disorders

Childhood

Disorders

Eating Disorders

...this too too solid flesh

I want someone to come
and take me home

Take me home

A Lifetime Without Clouds

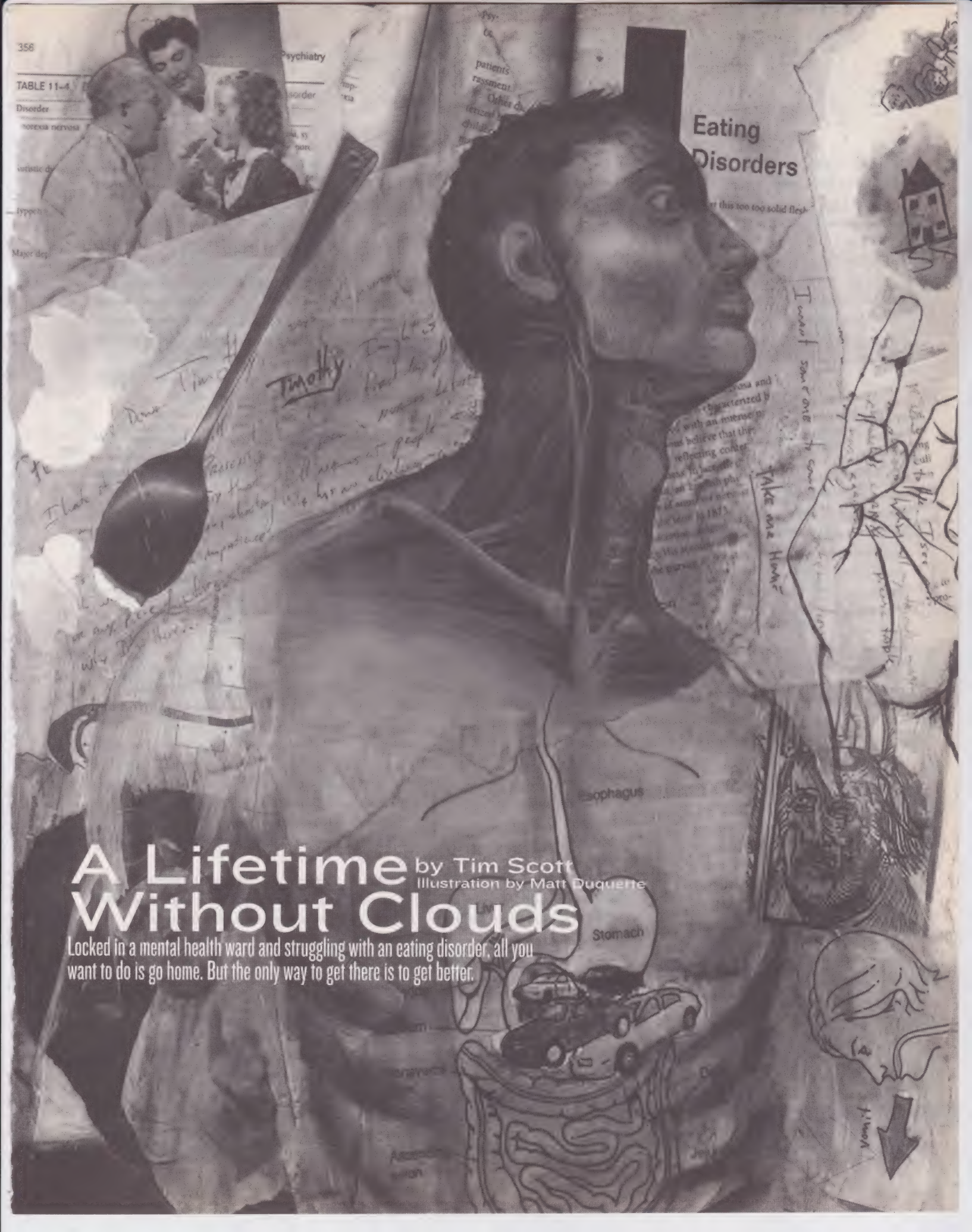
by Tim Scott

Illustration by Matt Duquette

Locked in a mental health ward and struggling with an eating disorder, all you want to do is go home. But the only way to get there is to get better.

Stomach

Vomit



disorders in this ward, which is fine by me, because my problem isn't just an eating disorder.

Don't get me wrong, I do have an eating disorder—anorexia nervosa—even though I don't like to call it that. It's not that I'm embarrassed, but the definitions seem so restricting. My friend Jessica says I'm depressed.

"I don't really think that's the right word." I replied the first time we talked about it, "that's not really what it feels like."

"Yeah, but you're always looking for a new one," she said, "but face it: That's what you are. That's exactly how I would describe you. Sorry dude."

...

Someone from the staff is always coming to get you. Patients are like puppets: When a doctor or a nurse wants you to go somewhere, they tug at your wire strings and say, "It's time to get weighed." . . . "It's meal time" . . . "Meeting is in 10 minutes" . . . "Activities" . . . "The doctor is down the hall waiting for you."

Every minute is a waiting game. Here, people wait for me at the bathroom door. They wait for a glowing answer to appear in one of the brain scans that they perform on me. I wait for the needles that enter different areas of my arms and chest. I wait for the cold suction cups of a machine to caress and then sting me. We all wait for a diagnosis when there really isn't one that fits.

My imperfections have always been tangled like the old adage "which comes first the chicken or the egg?" Am I not eating because I'm depressed, or am I depressed because I'm not eating? There is so much more to it than adding up the symptoms, as if they are numbers in an algebra problem. All along we've been missing a variable—until recently.

...

In 2003, The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) found that children who experience serious strep throat infections are at risk of developing symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder. The onset may be caused when the antibodies, which should act as an immune defense system against the infection, start to attack the brain in a process that psychiatric community has dubbed PANDAS—Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal infections. According to NIMH, 3.3 million adults between 18 and 34 have some form of OCD throughout any given year, but it's very difficult to detect in children.

When I was about eight or nine, I had strep with a high fever for over a week. This infection tunneled into my brain, buried itself under tissues and cells, and squirmed into a cozy hiding place. It wasn't long before my brain was seized by an indescribable anxiety. I had no idea what was happening to me.

I was 10 when the symptoms began. Both disorders—the OCD and the anorexia—surfaced at the same time; they were in cahoots, acting as instigators. Their symptoms played off one another, exchanging ideas and guidelines, picking up where the other left

off. No doctor or specialist could tell me why I was feeling this way. My "disordered eating"—this was what the nurse that was treating me before I was admitted calls it—opened with a bang.

I remember it vividly: I came home from school one day really hungry. I had three bowls of Fruit Loops, a cereal bar, chocolate, and some crackers. My stomach has never accepted food properly—digestion feels like cars are being impounded inside my body. Ten minutes later I was throwing up on the carpet in the family room. This is when the OCD found the perfect outlet: I was convinced that ingesting food would make me sick. The thought of putting things into my mouth—swallowing anything, even when my stomach was bubbling with requests—disgusted me. The harder I tried to avoid getting sick, the more my health deteriorated.

...

Apparently, he's not Dr. So-and-So, not to me. "It's OK if you call me Edwin." Edwin's been assigned to supervise my meals. "I'm sure we'll be hanging out a lot, so I see no problem with first names, right?"

I understand that Edwin is only being nice—trying to make me feel more comfortable with everything that is happening. But it's not every day that people sit right next to me, watch me while I eat, and calculate the calories on a piece of paper. He urges me to eat "just one more bite" as if I'm doing sit-ups. I guess it's an appropriate analogy since we are training, in a sense—I'm training my stomach to accept food again.

...

All the kids here are pretty messed up, but I like them all the same.

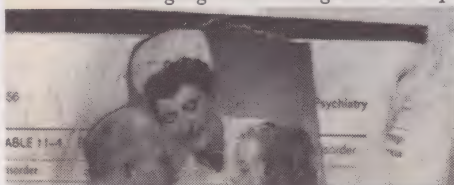
Mario put his foot through a window after he got in an argument with his mom. He's around 17, tall, muscular, but not intimidating. He does push-ups in his room a lot.

Sam was shot a few years ago and now has no sensation in his right arm because the bullet clipped his tendons and nerves like meaningless strings. He walks around the ward constantly dabbing at his forehead with a hand towel he dips into ice cold water, preventing hot flashes that bring along a sharp, stinging pain to his immobile arm. He asked a doctor to amputate the arm and they sent him here.

Katrina has skin that shines and a smile that helps everyone get through the day a little easier. She was found walking back and forth along a bridge near her house with a belly full of pills.

Miguel came from a juvenile hall facility. He was serving time for killing someone while under the influence of PCP. He threatened to kill himself and the state decided to put him here. Now, the two of us play a game similar to the one my brother and I used to play, the only difference is that I can hit him back—I'm starting to gain enough energy to make a fist now. We exchange punches to the jaw on a daily basis. Not full strength, but just enough so that you can hear a pop or a crack.

Eddie was my roommate for about a week. He tried to stab



56
ABLE 11-1
Psychiatry
Disorder

himself in the shower. Crimson mixed with water made a mess that swirled around the drain.

Shelley tried to jump through a window one day when my family was visiting. We were sitting in a room by ourselves and she ran hysterically. They signaled for the armed guards who dragged her away with unnecessary force. After she left the room, my brother sort of stared at the floor until he got up to leave. He put his arms around me when we were saying good-bye; he didn't seem scared to touch me anymore, and it felt good to hear his voice soft, not yelling. It felt good to know that he was capable of something other than anger.

After meeting all these people and hearing their stories in and out of meetings, I can't help saying to myself:

I don't belong here.

I don't belong here.

I don't belong . . .

"Timothy?"

"Here."

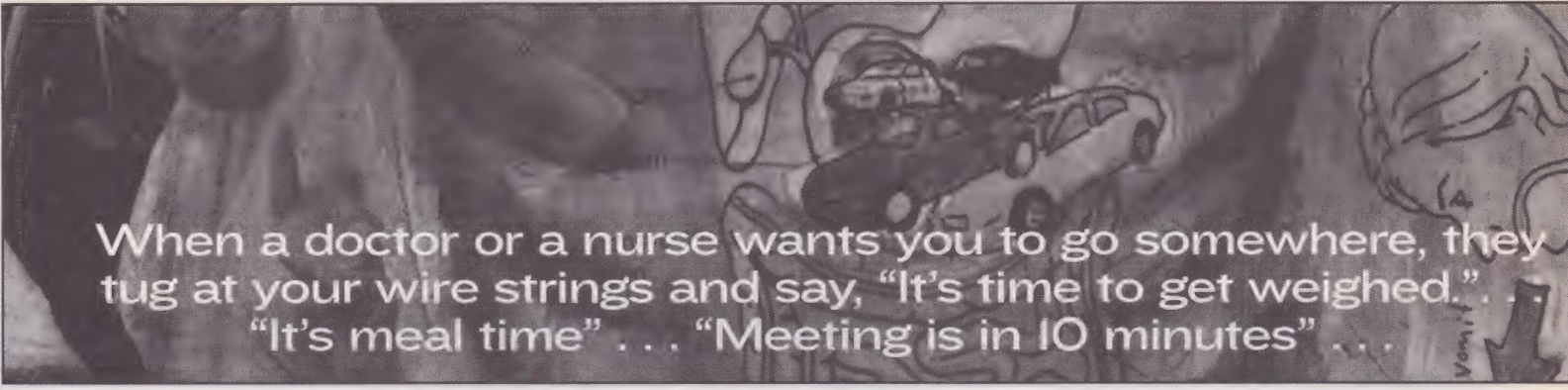
day I got sick. They order me to finish all eight ounces at each meal. They tell me I have to eat everything on my tray, but they don't really expect me to because they know my stomach is still only the size of a small egg. They threaten to use a feeding tube if I refuse to eat. I would do anything to avoid that procedure. I walk away from every meal feeling incredibly full and nauseous. I never throw up, deliberately or accidentally, but I always feel like I should.

• • •

The nurse interrupts my thoughts from behind me—"the doctor is down the hall waiting for you." Privacy doesn't exist here; doors to every room on this floor are accessible and open—except of course the ones that lead to town.

"Ten minutes, OK Timothy?"

When I get to the conference room, there's a lady seated in one of two chairs. She's perusing through papers in a thick file. I'm ready for another speech, for another premature diagnosis. There's hope that she may have one, but looking at her glasses slip-



When a doctor or a nurse wants you to go somewhere, they tug at your wire strings and say, "It's time to get weighed." . . . "It's meal time" . . . "Meeting is in 10 minutes" . . .

• • •

I ate with Edwin alone every day for two weeks because I feel uncomfortable eating in front of everyone else. I'm the only person who has this problem here, but I've started eating with the rest of the patients now. Sam tried to joke around with me as our food arrived. The paper used to count the calories was slipping out from underneath the lid.

"Tim gets a special tray?" he said it sort of jokingly, as if he were missing out on something he didn't know existed.

"No," Edwin said "it's just that he needs to gain some weight so we choose his meals for him."

"Well, I think I need to put on some pounds too. I'll start filling those menus out now, OK Edwin?"

That's about as funny as it gets here.

They give me a container of Ensure with every meal. It's a bad replica of a milkshake—thick and strong and hard to swallow. You get to choose between three flavors: vanilla, chocolate, or strawberry. The only one I won't drink is chocolate—it reminds me of the

ping from her temples, I doubt it.

"Hi," she waves. "Come on in."

I sit down directly across from her. She keeps the file in her lap. The beige book is filled with height/weight charts, numerous sentences from numerous appointments, and a collection of signatures accumulated from being passed from one doctor to the next.

We go through the same survey of questions. She asks about my childhood, about the ways I feel, what I think of everything that's happened. She asks what I like to do. My replies run into the cold linoleum floors. One long interval of silence passes.

"We're going to do a Rorschach test now, Tim. It's really not a test even. You tell me what you see in these pictures I show you. Simple enough, right?"

The pictures all seem sad to me. I see a lot of animals. I see my house. I think I see a placard hiding all my friends making funny faces. I see two cockroaches carrying a picnic table. I think I see my house again.

I want someone to come and take me home. ©

Every day buses pull into a dusty Guatemalan border-town called Tecun Uman carrying passengers who are on the first leg of a very long journey. For years, hopeful immigrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras have been arriving with little more than the clothes on their backs and a dream of a better life locked up tight in their hearts. From here, they cross the river. Once they get to the other side, they begin their grueling dash towards the US border. But before they take that dive into the ice-cold deep end, there's a little oasis called the Casa del Immigrante that opens its doors to the many road-weary people who arrive on its doorstep every day.

The Casa—sponsored by the Lutheran Church and the Government of Denmark—is a temporary shelter for immigrants who are headed into Mexico and the US. Approximately 40 to 50 migrants arrive each day. They are given a bed for up to three days, food, and counseling for those who want it.

Father Ademar Barilli has been working in the Casa for nine years. He is well acquainted with the risks associated with the journey. "The true Southern border of the United States is not the one it shares with Mexico," he explains, "it is here—between Mexico and Guatemala."

The people who come through Tecun Uman cannot afford to pay a coyote—a smuggler—to get them to the US. Instead they opt to travel as stowaways on the trains headed through Mexico.

"It's a very dangerous way to travel because the immigrants that come to take the train have to carry everything they have on them," Barilli explains. He fears the risks of traveling this way. It makes them easy prey for thieves and *mareros*—gangs that are becoming infamous for their unflinching brutality.

The train station in Tapachula lies just over the border that sep-

arates Mexico and Guatemala. Catching the train here is one of the most treacherous legs of the entire trip: roving gangs attack the trains frequently, and immigration authorities sweep through this station regularly. Even those who slip by unnoticed run the risk of falling as they climb up the side of the moving train in the dark. Many people make it through safely, while others are not so fortunate. As the train pushes off, people are often left behind, some are captured, others are shot, some fall under the train, and still others have been hacked up by thieves who wield machetes and left for dead beside the train tracks. Despite the risks, the traffic through the Tapachula train station continues to flow as true grit and determination draw people to the destination that many refer to as "the gateway to the North."

At first glance, the train yard in Tapachula seems ordinary. A rusty water tower hovers over rows of boxcars that rest in the overgrown weeds. You have to peek into the shadows to see what makes the station at Tapachula unique; look carefully and you may catch a glimpse of anxious travelers crouching in hiding places. With one eye they're watching anxiously for the train to arrive and staying alert for any sign of the Immigration police with the other.

When the train finally pulls in, a sudden burst of activity erupts as people scramble out of their hiding-places to grab hold of the train as it cruises down the track. Before you know it, it vanishes, taking with it a fresh load of American dreams.

Raul and his brother Omar, both in their late 20s, came to Tapachula from Honduras. Raul says they're "headed to the US because ever since Hurricane Mitch, we have no opportunities. When you can't find work, what are you supposed to do? I'm not going to start stealing." But in the shadows of night Raul explains that as brothers they share one dream and it's this dream that keeps driving them northward. Omar is deaf and never learned to speak. In the twilight Raul explains

DESPERATE TO REACH THE US BORDER, CENTRAL AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS RISK EVERYTHING TO BOARD A TRAIN THEY HOPE WILL TAKE THEM TO A BETTER LIFE.

A PHOTO ESSAY BY VICTOR BLUE

that he's heard that there are schools that teach sign language in the US. He dreams that one day he and Omar could learn sign language so they can finally talk to each other.

Jesus Israel Garcia, from El Salvador, says he's only headed as far as Monterrey. He's a veteran in this train yard and he's generally willing to give people pointers on how to board the train safely while it's moving, "The train is like a ship," he says. "You just have to know how to sail it."

Unfortunately, these waters are dangerous.

The *Albergue Jesus El Buen Pastor* is a church-run convalescent home that sits on a quiet residential street in Tapachula. Injured immigrants—the victims of las mareros attack and others who were injured in train accidents—are brought here to recuperate. They stay in dorms until they can figure out what they will do next. The few personal effects that they own are strewn out on small bedside tables. The walls are covered with snapshots of former guests and pictures of the Blessed Virgin.

Patricia Ramos, a 30-year-old Honduran woman, was shot in the hip during a mareros attack. Carlos Cargamo has two bullet wounds in his leg. Eliza is 22, her face is lined with stitches where the machetes blade struck her. Her sister Hipolite dies on the way to the hospital. Oscar Rivas was struck repeatedly in the face with a machete; doctors tell him that his eyes were completely destroyed.

Eliza is sitting with Oscar Rivos, feeding a banana to him through the small holes in the bandages that cover his entire face. They are planning to return to El Salvador as soon as they feel well enough to weather the trip. They're all terrified attack victims and refuse to be photographed. They fear that if the mareros find out where they are, they'll come back to finish the job. Patricia is haunted by the experience, "The mareros have no fear, they have nothing.

They have no love for anyone."

A surprising number of people recuperating at the Albergue are amputees. Hugo is a 16-year-old from Guatemala who lost his leg after he fell from the train; now he spends his days watching TV and learning to use his crutches. Leti lost both of her legs when she slipped trying to climb the train. Leti has three sons—"they're a handful," she laughs. "They're staying with their grandmother now." She does not know what she will do: she's afraid she won't be able to provide for her family. Her brother came to help her recuperate, but ultimately, he wants to try to make his way to the States too.

When immigrants are arrested in Tapachula, they're taken to the *Estacion Migratoria*. When they arrive, they are divided up by nationality and sent to separate rooms. All the women and children stay in the lobby. Migrants who are captured anywhere in Mexico are brought here, processed, and returned to their home countries in buses as part of a US sponsored program called Plan Sur.

A group of Honduran migrants peer through the slot in the heavy steel door to their holding cell. They complain about the food, heat, and conditions, but they don't have long to wait—every afternoon the buses leave the station to cross the border at El Carmen and then it's off to the country they wish they could leave behind.

Despite the threat of arrest, of disfigurement, of deportation, and of death, many immigrants are determined to try again.

And it's for this reason that Barilli blames the US. "Year after year, they talk about combating immigration," he says, "but they never address the root of the problems that cause people to leave their home countries in the first place. The politics of North America are a politics of economy, not a politics of humanity. If the US were to invest in Central America what they are in the war on Iraq, there would be no immigration problem." ©

THE GATEWAY TO THE NORTH

Immigrants run to catch the freight train north.





2

3



2. Leti lives at the Albergue de Jesus el Buen Pastor until she decides what to do after losing both of her legs under the train.

3. In the trainyard the night before, they told us they were not mareros. The next day they attacked the train.

4. She lay alone in the cemetery, murdered on the train.

5. Hugo, 18, is from Mazatenango Guatemala, and lost his leg trying to jump the train to the north.

6. Elisa recovers in the Albergue, from being hit in the face multiple times with a machete during the attack on the train.



6





7



8

7. Honduran immigrants waiting to be deported in the Estacion Migratoria, Tapachula.

8. Salvatrucha gang members identified by immigrants as having attacked the train.

9. She lay alone in the cemetery, murdered on the train.

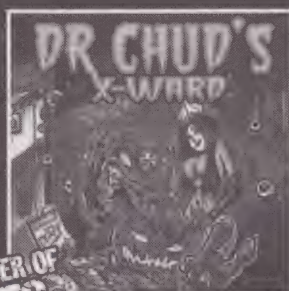


9

6 BLOOD CHURNING NEW RELEASES

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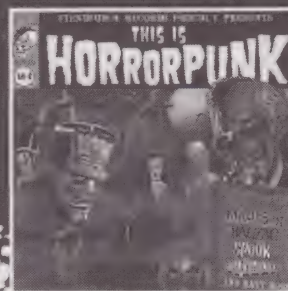
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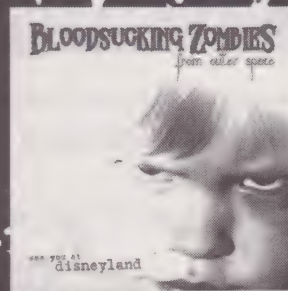
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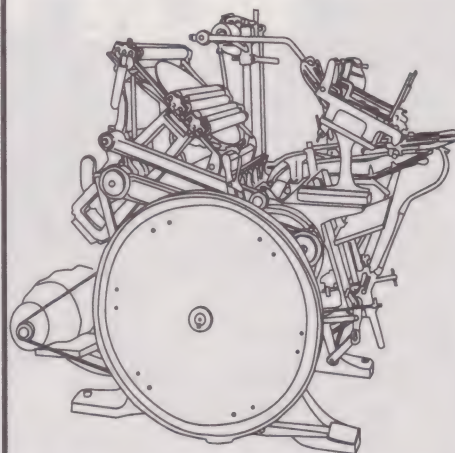
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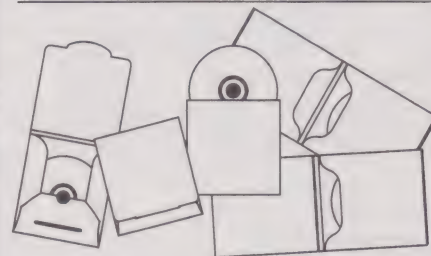


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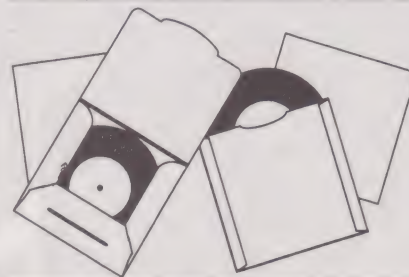
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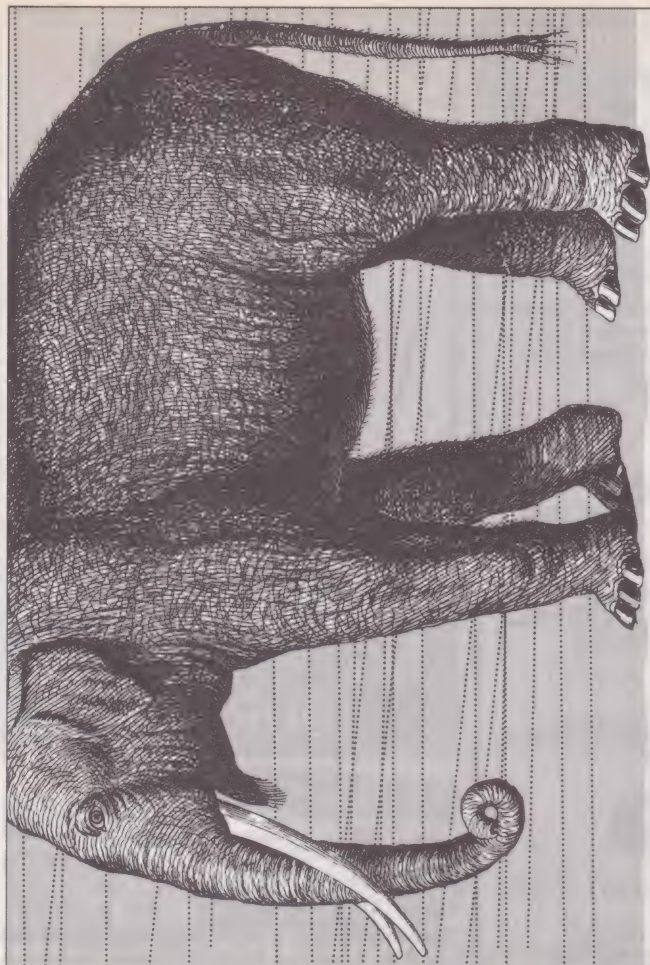
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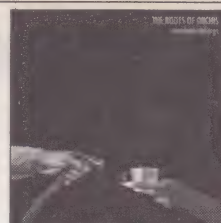
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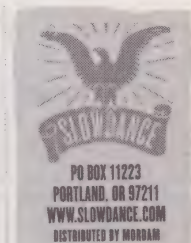
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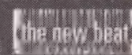
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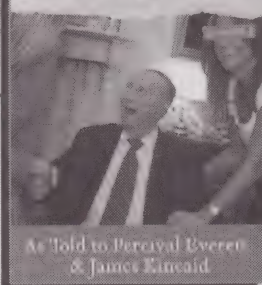
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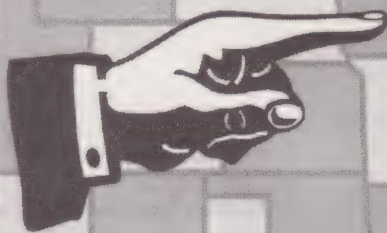
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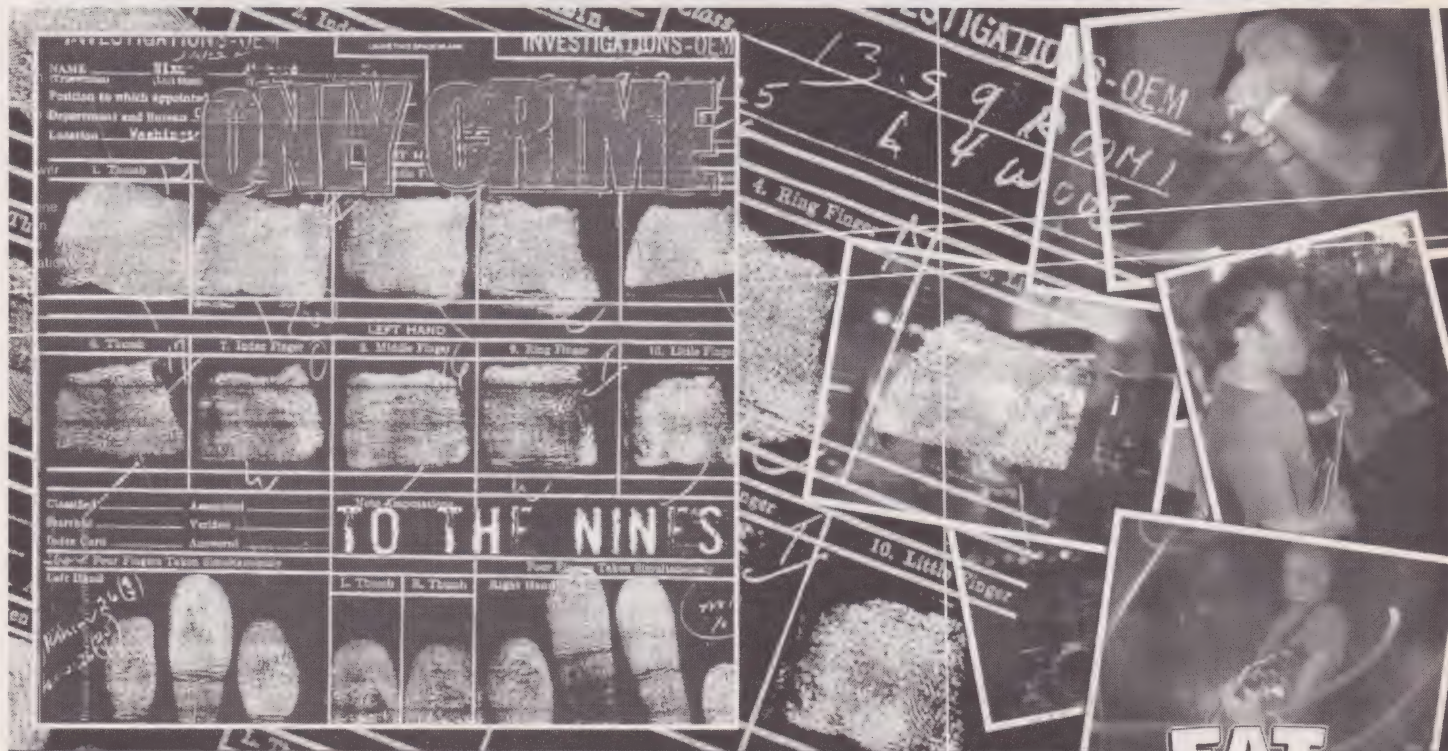
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What I was thinking when I drove my '63 Chevy pickup into the forest and left it there? I must have figured I'd get around to fixing it up one day, because I filled

the back end with trash that was going to need to go to the dump sooner or later.

Later, much later, as it turned out. That was in 1984, and 20 years later the forest and the earth had done their best to swallow up the truck. Trees had grown up all over what used to be a road, and the gravelly red clay that moves as inexorably as any glacier down the mountainside had covered the tires all the way up to the wheel wells.

Another 20 years, I reckoned, and the truck might disappear completely, becoming an artifact for archeologists of some future century to puzzle over. What would they make of the multi-colored paint job, most of it done with spray cans, or the "DK" and "Toxic Reasons" graffiti? Scientists determine much of what they know about ancient cultures from sifting through rubbish heaps; would they conclude that here had lived a tribe that subsisted solely on beer and black cherry yogurt?

For the first few years that the truck sat there in the woods, it was filed under the header of "Things I Really Ought To Take Care Of If I Ever Get Some Spare Time." Then it was demoted to the category of "Things That I Might Get Around To If I Ever Get My Whole Life Sorted Out And Don't Know What Else To Do With Myself." Eventually it slipped off even that list and into land of "You Know, I Really Don't Give A Fuck."

Until this spring, that is, when it finally came time to put the old homestead up for sale and I was told that no was going to buy it with a bunch of old cars and trucks littering up the place. (The truck had started an unfortunate trend, you see.) The guy from the wrecking yard came up from town and said, "Yeah, I can haul these others away, no problem, but I ain't taking that old Chevy till you get the trash cleared out of it."

No problem, I assured him. Hell, even if it had taken me a year or two to accumulate all that trash, I shouldn't need more than a day or two to shovel it into bags and haul it away. I was mistaken. It's easy to throw empty bottles into the back of a truck. It's a lot harder to get them out 20 years later, when they've been smashed into thousands of shards of potentially artery-severing glass and gotten tangled up in a morass of old netting, hoses, disintegrating cardboard, and the aforementioned yogurt containers.

Two days later, I'd emptied maybe half the truck bed, but that was just the bottles and cans that were still in one piece. All the broken glass was still to come, and I decided to take a break and clear out the cab instead.

That would be a breeze, I figured. Nothing in there but some old plastic bags and sheets, and, inexplicably, still more yogurt containers. That was strange. I didn't remember eating much yogurt while I was driving.

I pried the door open and heard an angry, rustling sound. Rattlesnakes are common in those parts, so I stepped back and poked at the pile of debris with my shovel. More rustling, but it didn't sound like a snake, so I lifted the pile a bit, and saw him underneath, quivering with fear and frustration.

It was a pack rat, and I was disturbing his nest, which reached from the floor of the truck nearly to the ceiling, and covered the entire seat. Well, what was left of the seat, since the industrious little rat had removed most of the stuffing and incorporated it into the walls of his little Taj Mahal.

Many people, especially city people, think that "pack rat" is just an expression used to describe people who compulsively collect and hoard things. Having now cleared out three pack rat nests, I know differently. A pack rat is not much bigger than your average mouse, but he can build a nest five to seven feet high and of a similar circumference using only objects he finds lying around the immediate vicinity. It would be like you or I building ourselves a home the size of Buckingham Palace out of stuff we found in our neighbors' trashcans.

It took me all afternoon to clear out the mini-mansion that Mr. Pack Rat had spent the better part of a year in building, and then a near-miracle occurred: the wrecking yard guy took pity on

me and hauled the truck away with the rest of the trash still in it. Now it was time to tackle my own personal pack rat hovel: the house I had lived in on and off for the past 22 years.

For the past 14 years it's been more off than on and, as country houses do when they're not taken care of, the place had fallen into rack and ruin. The shower hadn't worked since the pipes froze and shattered during the Big Freeze of '94. In '00 or '01 the hot water heater caught fire, so there'd been only cold water ever since. Now the toilet had mysteriously stopped working, and so had the lights, so on the night I got back from London, I wandered around with a flashlight, trying to get an idea of the size of the task before me.

I could have cried. Everywhere I turned, the flashlight beam fell upon more stuff I would have to deal with. Some of it was just plain trash. That would be the easiest, but still a pain when the nearest dump is an hour away over dusty mountain back roads.

Some of it was valuable furniture and art, things I once thought it made sense to acquire, and now wished I never had. At least I could get some money for them, maybe, though I've always been lousy at selling things, and usually end up giving them away to someone else. But the overwhelming majority of the house's contents fell into the category of "too good to throw away, too useless to keep."

That included about 1,500 vinyl LPs, 500 7"s, about a thousand cassette tapes, and "only" a few hundred CDs and fanzines. Some of the records were from my collection dating back to the 1950s and '60s, but most were given to me as promos and demos. The same was true of the cassettes, CDs, and zines. When I was running a fanzine and a record label, they used to come flooding into my mailbox, and I almost never gave or threw any of them away.

After a while, I rarely listened to or looked at them, either. When the freebies began arriving in the mid-'80s, it was very exciting. I would respond personally to each of them, but by the early '90s, it was no longer possible. There'd be 50 or 100 in a single week, and I was not only trying to run a fast-growing record label, I was also enrolled fulltime in college.

So they started going into boxes and bags, and when the boxes and bags overran my little room in Berkeley, they went up north to

Spy Rock, where there was plenty of space. That became the solution to everything I didn't have room for.

About once a year, I'd go up to Spy Rock and tell myself, "This is ridiculous. I've got to get rid of some of this stuff." But then I'd get bogged down in memories. I'd find a letter someone had sent me in 1973, or, worse, one I'd written and now hoped no one had ever read.

I'd see the flyer for the Clash show in 1979, or my hippie friend's art opening in 1969, or the shiny red rock *Whatshisname* and I found on some beach on the trip we took to wherever it was, once upon a time. A normal person might have a box or a drawer filled with souvenirs like this, but I had a whole houseful. The only things I'd ever thrown away were important ones, things I actually needed for the business of life.

So every time I tried to get rid of stuff, it would be the same story: before I'd filled up half a trash bag, I'd be sitting there surrounded by reminders of everyone and everything that had been in my life, that I wished had been in my life, or was now missing from my life. I'd be a sappy, sentimental mess, and I'd say the hell with it and put everything back into whatever disordered pile I'd pulled it out of.

"Some other time," I'd promise myself, and now the time had come. I couldn't afford to keep the old house anymore, not financially, not emotionally, not even morally (there's something wrong about letting a perfectly good house rot away when somebody else could be putting it to good use). So within a few weeks I would have to empty it all out, one way or another, even if it meant starting a giant bonfire in the front yard.

And that's one of the tactics I used—the bonfire, that is. It burned for about three days, and consumed old love letters, "poetry" I wrote when I was 20, books that were no longer readable, clothes that even the Salvation Army wouldn't take, and some of the trashier, more decrepit furniture.

I took boxes of demo tapes and fanzines down to Gilman, put up a sign saying "Free Stuff," and watched the kids swarm over them, like so many pack rats itching to feather their own nests. I sold or gave away my records and CDs, and the house's new owner-to-be agreed that I could leave behind any remaining furniture, like, for example, the half-ton piano that had started falling apart

when we'd slid it off the pickup truck and could probably never be moved again without disintegrating.

The place began looking like a home again instead of a mad-man's storehouse and, as I'd feared, pangs of regret and doubt crept over me. I couldn't leave all this, could I? Some of the most important stuff in my life had happened here. I'd typed the first issue of *Lookout* magazine on that table. Here was where the Lookouts practiced for our first couple of years, with no neighbors for a mile around to tell us, "Turn that racket down."

And there was the office where I'd run Lookout Records, filling mail orders late into the night, by solar-powered light, alone on a mountaintop but feeling connected to punk rock kids all over the planet. Hell, Operation Ivy and Screeching Weasel and Green Day had slept here. It took me a whole day just to remove all the band stickers.

But time had moved on, and I hadn't; that was the trouble. I was clinging to the past, and that kept me from enjoying the present and welcoming the future. Worse, I'd gotten in the habit of letting things represent or even take the place of people. The house and the land possess an almost unspeakable beauty, but a big part of their attraction for me had been that there I could (or so I thought) completely isolate myself from the world.

I no longer wanted to live like that, I realized, and then came the revelation: why I had wanted to live there in the first place. When I'd first visited Spy Rock, it was at the invitation of Udo, the East German carpenter who'd built the house. It looked like a Christmas card, set in the midst of a fir and pine forest, smoke curling over the snow-covered roof, Udo's kids playing with the dog, a huge feast on the table that I was invited to share. It was the most beautiful house I had ever seen, and the thought suddenly popped into my head that I should buy it.

This was one of only two times in my life that I had enough money to do crazy things like that. That's how my mountain adventure began, and though I wouldn't trade those years for anything, something was always missing from that house. It's only now, when I'm leaving it, that I finally understand what it was.

You see, I wasn't really trying to buy an exquisitely built redwood house set in near-pristine wilderness and surrounded by nature in all its glory, I was trying to buy the vision of happiness, warmth, and familial love that permeated it. Unfortunately, that wasn't included in the sale price.

And as I understood that, I also understood why I'd been a pack rat, why I'd accumulated all those things that reminded me of people but couldn't seem to get along with the people themselves, why I'd chosen to live with memories and regrets rather than ambitions and possibilities.

By the time you read this, I'll have taken my last walk down the rutted dirt road that winds through the property, taken my last, lingering look down into the Eel River Canyon and the Yolla Bolly mountains far to the east, gazed up one last time at the dark, brooding ridge that blocks the way to the outside world.

I'll remember blizzards and forest fires and crippling

droughts, the struggle to wring the last bits of water from a dried-up August creek or the battle to keep the road from washing out in a torrential December rainstorm. I'll remember these things and be grateful forever for them, because they taught me self-reliance and gave me a self-confidence I'd never had before.

But as I take that final turn around Iron Peak and the land disappears from view, I don't think I'll look back. Maybe because I don't want to be turned into a pillar of salt, but also because I think I've finally learned what I came there to learn: that letting go is just as important as embracing.



I didn't believe that Panty Raid was really going to get to play Mexico City. Not while I was screening shirts, not while I was packing up the jumbo supply of

Pepto, not even when I gave my dog a farewell scratch behind the ear. Even after our plane had touched down and we walked blindly into the throng of people milling around outside customs, it seemed like it was all happening to someone else.

Ali from Las Ultrasonicas and her friends met us in the airport lobby, and immediately whisked us away in a rusted blue van with non-bolted seats for what was to be our first of many rounds of a real-life, high-stakes version of Frogger in the streets of Mexico City.

We were invited to play in Mexico as part of the cultural center's "Gay Week." We had played with Las Ultrasonicas in Oakland a while back and I think that the sight of Brontez's gyrating naked butt acted as a hypnotizing device far more powerful than the simple swinging gold chain employed by most charlatans. So powerful, in fact, that Ali decided that our brand of trashy bubblegum punk would be perfect for both the sophisticated gay men and metalhead kids who would comprise our audience. She hooked us up with the ever-so-charming Juan Carlos Batiste who was organizing the event for the cultural center. He, in turn, gave us a reception that would've floored Guns n' Roses, much less our sleep-on-the-side-walk, eat-a-bowl-of-gruel, pay-us-in-beer-and-booty, low-expectation-style band.

Our hotel was swank, with a piano lounge, a gym, a pool on the roof, and, most impressively, each of us had our very own room to do with whatever we pleased. Mostly, what we pleased to do with them was watch cable with the air conditioner blasting and poop with the bathroom door open. But just knowing that we had the option of bringing groupies home or smearing shit on the wall if we had wanted to, with no one being the wiser, was satisfying in

itself. None of us had been pampered like this before and this fact was not hidden behind the cool veneer of rock-star nonchalance. In fact, there was nothing cool about us at all. We were about as country as any person could be. "Hey y'all! We got us a pool jest like the ones we seen on the teevee!" "What d'ya mean 'my own room'?" I cain't sleep in no room that ain't got at least one cousin and a couple of critters in it!"

After we checked into the hotel, a guy named Victor jammed us into his easter egg-lookin VW bug ("Barbie car") and took us on another perilous trip through the streets, more exhilarating than a ride on a mechanical bull. Lanes seem to exist only as a formality in this city. Three cars often squeeze alongside each other in the same lane and we were informed outright that "red lights are optional after midnight."

After discovering the joys of La Victoria beer with salt and lime, we were brought to a drag show in a club's basement. This is where it first really hit home that trying to get by with what little Spanish I retained from community college seven years ago was not going to cut it. The girls were obviously tearing up the stage, but I only understood every 50,000th word or so. It sounded like this to me: "la lalalala lalalalalala motherfucker lalalala lalala ass lalalalalala i have a sister lalalalalala." Ironically enough, the only part that I understood well is when one queen looked right into my drunken, dazed face and busted me with, "You don't understand." The show was two hours long. Two hours of wig changes and strobe lights and bursts of laughter that were an insoluble puzzle for me.

The next morning we boarded a bus to Acapulco. Forget all of those outdated movie images of an overcrowded Mexican bus with roosters on people's laps and extra passengers riding on the roof. The Estrella de Oro bus to Acapulco was like riding five hours on a cloud. The seats reclined, there were movies and refreshments. Greyhound never seemed like more of a mobile drunk tank than at that moment. The countryside was astonishingly lush, peppered with boxy houses stacked at interesting angles. Tin roofs, cement walls, bright blue or yellow, hammocks, and dogs running around. And if you got tired of looking out the window, you could actually fall asleep on the bus, a feat previously inconceivable to me as a veteran of Greyhound.

In Acapulco, we were met by yet another really handsome older man. Jose is the director of cultural affairs in Acapulco and he escorted us in a taxi to our hotel. I thought the only time I would ever drop words like "breathtaking ocean view" and "lush paradise" is if I got a job writing prize descriptions for a game show. But, no, our hotel was spectacular, built into the side of a cliff overlooking the ocean. Hermit crabs made their way up the thousands of steps that curved all over the hotel like that damned MC Escher print. They were so out-of-touch with what we were about, they apologized that there was a "problem" and we would be forced to share a two-room suite! Overlooking the ocean! With a private balcony! At any minute, I expected Mr. Rourke from Fantasy Island to jump out of our closet in his crisp white suit, like, "Boo-ya!"

It wasn't all ice cream castles and jungle love, though. An hour later, we were in yet another taxi on our way to our show. Like the part of the horror story where they find a hook in the roof of the car, it gradually unfolded that we were expected to play the Hard Rock Cafe! In Acapulco! Didn't see that one coming. The sound of my punk points plummeting sounded like a stone dropped into a bottomless well. We handled it like true professionals, though: by whining and drinking as fast as possible. Our audience consisted of a few locals, some fun ladyfriends of Jose's, reporters from the local paper, and a bunch of tourists. The table up front was full of white teenagers from West Virginia on some sort of senior trip or Outward Bound venture. Almost all of them had their hair in tiny braids a la Bo Derek. It was a frightening sight. I don't know that we came across too well, but the sight of Brontez in his short-shorts, Ian sliding across the floor on his back, and Seth singing "I Am Nasty" in the Hard Rock Cafe is pasted lovingly into my permanent mental scrapbook. Not one, but *two*, grunge cover bands rounded out the evening. They both played the same Stone Temple Pilots song. My friends became my heroes once again as my band-mates tore up the dance floor with the reality TV escapees and a couple of horny ladies.

The next day was the only free morning of our trip. We swam in a saltwater pool with tropical fish (one of which bit Ian's big toe) and waves crashed over us like that scene *From Here To Eternity* (but without the making-out and grinding). We ate a fancy lunch over the ocean, feeling like the luckiest motherfuckers ever to stumble across a free trip to a Mexican paradise by playing in a dirty punk band.

That night found us back in Mexico City. We barely had time to put our stuff down before going off to the awesome punk club, Alicia, to play again. Alicia *ruled!* It was reminiscent of all the great punk clubs I've ever been to. Better than Gilman though, because they served La Victoria! I felt like an ass because I had to have Ali translate everything and couldn't even ask to borrow drums for myself. Even when I thought I was speaking Spanish, nobody understood what I was talking about. I relied a lot on my powers as a mime to communicate my bodily necessities. We played, and nobody beat us up when Brontez got naked (although I noticed that the crowd split violently apart in an effort to dodge his airborne underwear hurled from the stage). A couple of surf bands played after us, and these three guys in Lucha Libre masks were getting down to them. We were pretty spent at the end of the night, propped against a wall, trying to invoke the spirit of David Lee Roth to keep us partying into the night, but failing. Eric from Los Bla and Ali gave us a ride back to our hotel.

At 11 am the next morning, we found ourselves wiping the sleep from our eyes at a rock'n'roll flea market. We played to a bunch of metalheads and a couple of punk kids who stared at us blankly. Then a Black Sabbath cover band played and they were appeased. We met a kid named David, from Tulsa, Oklahoma, who knew some of our friends. He and Alina and Alex took us

around the flea market after our perplexing performance. David helped me execute a deal for the *Hell Comes To Your House* comp and the *What Is It* comp, but I think I still wound up with the honky rate. Worth it. Brontez got some Ramones records with Spanish titles, The TeenTops, an Angry Samoans record that should've been mine, Tribe 8 (?!), and The Plasmatics. Seth got a 1910 Fruitgum Co 45 and an excellent comp. Ian got all three Rodney On the Roq comps (the first two of which *everyone* should own). Then we went to the Chopo Museum where we were playing later that night and listened to Las Ultrasonicas soundcheck for hours before our own five second soundcheck. Slept an hour at the hotel, and then rushed back to the museum to play the gay fest which was to be the grand finale of our trip and the reason we were able to come in the first place.

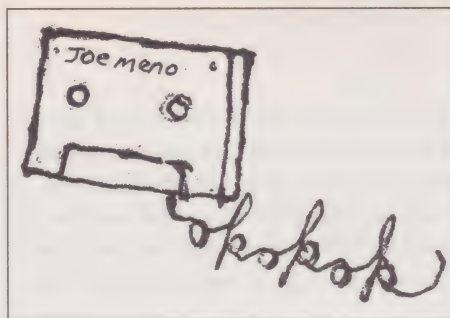
The auditorium looked like the set of "Smells Like Teen Spirit." Bleachers surrounded us and the stage was *huge*. Not tall, but really wide. It took up the whole floor. I don't even think Sammy Hagar in his heyday could've covered that much strutting territory. We played, Brontez got naked but wouldn't dance (for the first time ever!), the audience was attentive, but not a wild bunch. Then Las Ultrasonicas took the stage and tore it up. The guys in the Lucha Libre masks were back, standing on the stage and headbanging. I went outside and tried to find beer, feeling like the world's biggest feeb as I asked "Donde es la cerveza?" (where is beer?) to everyone I could flag down. They almost didn't let us back in the museum because I couldn't explain who we were. "El grupo de San Francisco. Tocar la guitarra esta noche!" It was a sad affair, but we eventually got back in.

After the show, we went with Victor to Juan Carlos' restaurant for a good-bye dinner. The place was as classy as the man himself. He painted all the art lining the walls: impressive, round-bodied tributes to famous Mexican paintings. We sat at a long table, filled with classy, older, handsome gay men. I thought that Brontez's head was going to pop off his body and launch into the air as he surveyed the booty buffet surrounding him. Somehow, he got no play. A couple of the dudes had crushes on Ian, however. Probably not only because he is sweet, attractive, and hetero, but also because he was the only one of us that did his best to communicate in Spanish. The rest of us would settle for grunting & pointing or calling for Ali to help us. I will never ever again be so crass as to go to another country without being able to communicate at least a little bit. I mean, come on, *Donde es la cerveza?* I should be shot.

...

Thanks to everyone who helped us out in Mexico. Juan Carlos, Jose, Jenny, Chris, Victor, Eduardo, David from Tulsa, Alex, Alina, Eric from Los Bla, and especially Ali. Everyone should check out Las Ultrasonicas when they come to California in August. They will destroy you.

write to me: Janelle/PO Box 4047/ Berkeley, CA. 94704



The Fun of Reliving Your Most Painful Moments

Many times, so far, I have done exactly the wrong thing at the wrong

time. It seems like a very human experience, something we all have in common, the fact that no matter what, there will be a great number of times you will, indeed, be an A-hole in your life. Being an asshole is, in this way, liberating. It takes on a kind of importance: the thing that, besides our impending deaths, might somehow unite us. Currently I don't how many assholes there are in America right now, percentage-wise, or through some scientific calculation or anything, but it seems like you could figure it out if you did this kind of math:

number of Camaros x number of Corvettes x number of dudes wearing "Big Johnson" T-shirts x number of times you have high-fived someone x number of young men and women wearing Confederate belt buckles and truckers caps

But what kills me most about assholes isn't the sheer number but the unapologetic, disregard for the act of being an asshole in the first place. There is nothing more sad than an asshole that doesn't know he is an asshole, because what makes the experience something worthwhile, is afterwards—days, weeks, months, even years later—you can say, "Yes. Yes I was an asshole on such-and-such a day. I am sorry. I will not make that particular mistake again."

The White House is now full of serious A-holes. Should we expect, as a group of human beings, that these elected officials, these very fallible men and women, will not make mistakes? Of course not. What is so deadly, so righteously inhuman, about the Bush administration is not the ongoing cavalcade of blunders, missteps, scandals, lies, and outright disregard for humanity, all the way from falsified documents to ignored evidence. To me, that is standard operation procedure for any large group of like-minded, determined easily-corruptible people. I mean would Al Gore or, good god, Ralph Nader not have made any significant mistakes? Of course they would have. What is so intolerable is that when these officials are confronted with the truth—the blatant, clear discrepancies between what they've said and what they've done—there is no admonition; there is no, "Yeah listen, we were totally fucked up one night and it sounded good at the time." Like a 10-ton brick hanging in the air waiting to fall, there is no simple apology, no statement claiming, "We have fucked up here, badly."

That to me, is why this administration needs to leave: Anyone who can't admit their mistakes can't grow from them. Just like your asshole cousin, Ron, who's addicted to meth and lives in your aunt's basement. Ron is going to be working at the food court the rest of his life until he comes upstairs, takes off his Chinese Wok

hat, sits down and says, "I am sorry for pawning your guitar. I have been an asshole and I want to make it right."

So, as perhaps a measure to inspire other like-minded assholes and possibly, possibly, elected officials across the country to step forward and take the blame for their plentiful mistakes, I now present my top five worse fuck-ups, in script form, so you can relive these moments at home on your own, and in proper chronological order.

#1. Ms. Napenelli's classroom, First Grade, Chicago, Illinois, 1980, 3:15 p.m.

Ms. Napenelli:

Joe, we need to have a serious talk. I gave you five failed papers to take home for your parents to sign and you haven't brought any back. Why?

Joe:

I don't know.

Ms. Napenelli:

Well, can I look in your desk and check to see if you brought them home?

Joe:

OK.

Ms. Napenelli checks Joe's desk and finds about 30 failed assignments crunched up in tiny balls at the back, behind his books.

Ms. Napenelli:

What? You haven't taken any of these home?

Joe:

No, I don't think so.

Ms. Napenelli:

Don't you want to pass first grade?

Joe:

No, not really.

#2. In Brian O'Malley's basement in Chicago, Illinois, 1989, 6:25 p.m.

Joe:

Metallica? No way. Metallica is all gay and satanic. Mötley Crüe is way better.

#3. Debbie Ladzinski's basement, Chicago, Illinois, 1990, 4:30 p.m.

Debbie:

I just want to say I really like you. Like, you know, like-you like-you.

Joe:

I like you, too.

The young couples kisses, making out until Joe tries to slip his hand up Debbie's shirt. She pushes his hand away as they continue to make out.

Joe:

Debbie?

Debbie:

Yes?

Joe:

I've been thinking. I think we should see other people, maybe.

#4. At a club in Chicago, Illinois, 2003, 5:15 p.m.

Joe:

Maybe George Bush really does know what he's doing. Who knows? Maybe the war will stabilize the region.

#5. A tiny restaurant in Chicago, Illinois, 2004, 7:00 p.m.

Joe:

Intelligent people who have babies nowadays are selfish, because they should know better about the population explosion and overcrowding and everything. Having children with the world the way it is, well that's just ignorant.

Koren:

I want to have kids.

Joe:

Me, too, definitely.

...

So hopefully, with the admonition of failure comes the possibility for change, for the thing that, in the end, saves all human beings: the chance to try and do it better, or differently, the next time, maybe. Maybe.

*I will be on tour for my new book, *Hairstyles of the Damned*, for a month. Come see me. Check www.punkplanetbooks.com for finalized dates and locations.*

Friday, Aug 13 Bloomington IN

Saturday, Aug 14 Louisville, KY

Sunday Aug 16 LA

Monday 16 Bakersfield, CA

Tuesday 17 San Jose, CA

Wednesday 18 Eugene, OR

Thursday 19 Portland, OR

Friday 20 Seattle, WA

Saturday 21 San Francisco, CA

Sunday 22 Fresno, CA

Tentative September dates

Sept 1 Toronto

Sept 2 Ottawa

Sept 3 Montreal

Sept 5 NYC

Sept 6 Cleveland, OH

Sept 7 Cincinnati, OH

Sept 8 Chicago, IL ©

Our Little Tribe Has Always Been

by Mark Andersen

The rally for affordable housing was small but spirited; righteous and raucous, with a rainbow of races, ages, and cultures represented. But something important seemed to be missing.

It was a typical DC summer day, with any comforting shreds of morning's cool burned away by the blistering sun. Yet even as a senior friend and I suffered in the heat, the power of the protest outside the Cavalier Apartments was palpable.

Like many complexes built or renovated in DC after the 1968 riots, the Cavalier was now in danger of losing its "Section 8" status and thus becoming no longer affordable to those of low-to-moderate income. The event, organized by the Cavalier Tenants Association, Washington Inner-City Self-Help (WISH), and the National Alliance of Housing and Urban Development Tenants (NAHT), was intended to put the building's owners on notice. The message was clear: These tenants would not go, not without a fight.

Squinting in the searing sun, dripping with sweat, I found myself deeply moved as speaker after speaker came to the mic, vowing to fight for their homes.

Sometimes the fiery talk led into rowdy chanting. One elderly African-American woman rested on her cane, standing with other seniors. Together, they leaned into round after vigorous round of a rather inelegant chant: "We tenants are tired of getting screwed/We'll fight back, that's what we'll do!" The sight brought both a smile and a tear.

We were black, brown, and white; female and male; old and young, together, united in struggle for a basic human right: the right to housing. In its way, the morning was a glimpse of the larger movement we would need to truly change this city, country, and world. But why was I so troubled?

As it happens, the Cavalier stands within sight of a number of past and pre-

sent punk rock group houses, nestled at the edge of two bohemian-heavy neighborhoods, Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights. Yet I recognized only one other person from the punk community, Michelle Lee of the National Coalition for the Homeless, later joined by another punk friend. We made up a mere trio amidst the couple hundred in attendance.

Beyond our little knot, this rally was virtually punk-free. Perhaps it was simply due to the early hour (10 a.m. on a Monday morning) or lack of publicity, but the striking absence of punks left a nagging twinge in my heart. When Parisa Norouzi, a gifted young organizer for WISH, asked about "the book you are writing"—*All the Power*—I tried to explain its intent. I did so a bit sadly, knowing that in some ways this event exemplified why I was writing it. How does punk tie into a larger picture of possible transformation, for good or for ill?

The punk scene can and does function as a "free space," a "temporary autonomous zone." This is a context in which the control of society is weakened enough, in whatever way, to allow for seeds to be planted, to germinate, and begin to grow, even blossom.

Such space is an essential precondition for transformation. Put in more punk rock terms (a mid-'80s Chumbawamba lyric adopted by Positive Force DC via *Maximum Rocknroll*), "Isolation is the biggest barrier to change." When Positive Force started out, the mere fact that we were together in the same room having the courage to speak the dreams of our hearts out loud made all else possible.

As a result, punk can tie into larger struggles in a positive way. A growing sense of personal identity and power can lead to a sense of solidarity with other misfits. The next step is to take a consistent stand for and with the underdog, with a healthy insistence on individual liberty balancing

the movement-building; what I would call a truly revolutionary politics.

Punk should readily lend itself to such a stance. In fact, the very name suggests identification with the outcasts, the untouchables, the throwaways of the world. Originally, "punk" was Old English for "prostitute," appearing, among other places, in Shakespeare's writings. Since then, the term has come to signify, in turn, a young male partner of a homosexual (catamite); a hoodlum; poor in quality; an inexperienced youth; a weakling. Most recently, it has come to be a gay slur in African-American urban culture, and, finally, to refer to the victim of homosexual rape in prison slang.

The common thread here should be obvious. All of these refer to "something or someone worthless or unimportant," as noted by the Random House Compact Unabridged Dictionary.

Punk, therefore, at its root, can be seen as a potentially inclusive and empowering term. Once reclaimed (à la "queer" by gay, lesbian, bi-, and trans-activists), the word can affirm the value of those deemed worthless by society. To see our planet from the "punk" point of view, from the underside of life and history, could be a truly fundamental, even revolutionary shift in consciousness.

That is it could be, in principle. Sadly, punks often don't get to this larger view. Instead, punk (as it actually exists, not in possibility) has tended to become attached to a politics of self-affirmation and independence in a narrow, self-focused way that leads us to glorify ourselves and our movement (largely white, male, middle-to-upper class). Unfortunately, wrestling with and overcoming personal desperation does not necessarily translate into progressive, much less revolutionary, politics.

To understand how this can play out,

let's step back and look at Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and the controversy it helped to unleash. For many of my friends who weren't part of the punk underground, the song and associated album, *Nevermind*, marked a turning point. For Stephanie Olson, co-founder of the Empower Program (a visionary project to reduce gender violence), *Nevermind* was "the beginning of something hopeful, progressive out of the Reagan/Bush years . . . It was like our generation was finally starting to fight back, to create something of its own."

Seen from within the scene, the view was a bit different. Stated in the most stark and unforgiving terms, Nirvana was the Benedict Arnold of underground punk, opening it to plunder and pillage by the corporate powers-that-be. To such observers, after "Smells Like Teen Spirit," everything in the scene began to "smell" as well; to stink with the rank aroma of greed.

Whichever is the more fair assessment, one thing is plain: After "Smells Like Teen Spirit," punk would never feel quite the same. While the underground not only survived, but even thrived (sometimes cleverly taking advantage of corporate resources), never again did it exist as before Nirvana blew the roof off the place, our place. Now, underground punk will always stand in an uneasy, blurry tension with a more mainstream variant. This makes the situation all the more complex; it also fills punk with more possibility.

"Smells Like Teen Spirit" was unusually well-equipped both for its role as cultural breakthrough and benchmark dividing one punk era from another. First of all, the song itself was wrestling with the question that the burgeoning punk underground had begun to beg: Just how far can this go?

Nirvana biographer Michael Azerrad has cannily suggested that the song was both a dismissal and an affirmation of the revolutionary power of punk. As Kurt Cobain told

Azerrad not long after the song radically altered the terms of pop discourse, "The whole song is made up of contradictory ideas. It's just making fun of the idea of having a revolution. But it is a nice thought."

If this double-edged exegesis seems shot through with the safe irony all too vogue in "alternative rock" circles, the passion of the song made it clear that much more was at stake. As Cobain elaborated: "[Nirvana] was in a position where it was expected to fight in a revolutionary way toward the major corporate machine. A lot of people just told me flat out, 'You can use this as a tool . . . something that will really change the world.' I just thought, how dare you put that kind of pressure on me. It's stupid. And I feel stupid and contagious."

The radical intent of the band was surely telegraphed by the album's cover, a slightly slicker descendent of punk artists like Winston Smith and Raymond Pettibon, creators of many of the Dead Kennedys and Black Flag graphics, respectively. An entire social critique was elegantly and subversively communicated in one simple image: a newborn baby swimming after the almighty dollar, the bait on society's hook.

This cover set an immediate tone for interpreting "Smells Like Teen Spirit," but its usefulness in this regard only went so far. Arriving without a full lyric sheet, the song's words were so distorted and slurred as to defy understanding, much less clear interpretation. As a result, the "Smells Like Teen Spirit" video—allegedly inspired by teen-insurrection flick *Over the Edge*—provided the subtext. The clip is one of the rare occasions where a video added depth to a song, rather than damaging it.

From the sight of a Converse All-Star sneaker in the opening shot, to the subversion of that most hated high school institution—the pep rally—by the smashing of regimented roles (cheerleaders breaking ranks, sprouting tattoos and anarchy symbols; the

blurring of the band into the crowd, with audience members taking the instruments), the video gets a lot of what is most precious in my experience of punk just right.

As fate would have it, the song soon took the teenage rebel dream common to the underground and blasted into the mainstream, pushing the social impact of punk far beyond the basements that theretofore had been its bastions. Suddenly the idea of "revolution" seemed both more likely (so many people being touched by the message) and further away (the radical method and message of punk being turned into corporate consumer commodity).

Viewed from the present moment where punk has been an "alternative rock" product in the mainstream for more than a decade—an entire new generation of punks having grown up with that as a primary point of reference—the conflict that erupted within the scene in the '90s seems almost incomprehensible. However, viewed from the context of that time, it seems almost inevitable.

With the dizzying ascent of Nirvana followed closely by other punk-related acts, lines began to be drawn, often in the most stark, simplistic terms. In the deal-making frenzy and subsequent backlash, compromise bore the bitter fruit of purist counter-reaction. Once flush with the free air of creativity, the scene now swirled in a confused, poisonous haze. Old friends turned on each other with frightening regularity, their splits sometimes played out in the gutter press.

The destructive power of illusions was painfully on display during this punk "civil war." For me, the biggest chimera of all soon became apparent: my belief that the underground punk scene could be some sort of revolutionary "vanguard," just by staying true to its independent path.

While I still believe in building counter-institutions to the corporate

mainstream, now I see the "major vs. indie" argument in a more complex light.

Although this debate is important, it can distract from larger issues, feeding a purism and elitism that keep us talking only to ourselves, locked in subcultural ghettos.

At base, the question is quite simple: Is punk meant to be "populist" (for the masses) or "elitist" (for the enlightened few)? This tension has been present since the beginning, since our "tribe," like all others, finds some of its power in the exclusion of others, in the sense that we are somehow different, even better. The courageous stance—"Something doesn't have to be popular to be good"—can turn to a far less progressive stand: "Anything popular must be bad." Thus does the "misfits club," once successful, tend toward becoming "for only the chosen few."

This is deeply ironic, since many of us came to punk out of a feeling of rejection or exclusion. We wanted to find a place where we belonged, where we were affirmed, where we found community. This, in itself, is surely a healthy impulse; yet a sanctuary for self-affirmation can quickly turn to the denigration of others, into a ghetto of arrogance and self-righteousness.

What I am suggesting is that the punk ideal of "independence" is a misguided, even dangerous illusion, at least if taken too far. The DIY ideal is a powerful, positive affirmation of untapped human possibility when interpreted as "doing what you can with whatever you've got wherever you are right now." Taken as "I won't ally with you for fear of appearing to compromise myself," a more retrogressive, anti-revolutionary approach is hard to imagine.

No, revolution is built on interdependence, the idea that people are tied together in a multitude of ways, that we need each other. While this is true on the most basic human level, it is even more so once we try to objectively assess how to build the power to challenge or even fundamentally alter the system.

It is surely true that the small, intimate scale of punk shows (as opposed to "stadium rock") and affiliated culture is not meant as an elite stance. For many punks, it is more than a statement about

life within a mass consumer society; it is a concrete act of rebellion against it.

How then, can punk (which has historically drawn so much of its power from this intimate, DIY scale) translate in any meaningful way to a mass audience? Some of the mainstream punk surely acts as a bridge, helping to bring fans to a less commodified, underground experience of the community. Commercially successful punk can also bring radical ideas into the mainstream, as Rage Against the Machine, Pearl Jam, Chumbawamba, Good Charlotte, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Beastie Boys, and Jane's Addiction have sometimes tried to do.

At the same time, the selling of punk via these corporate channels can help disarm its subversive power by making punk a simple product. Which tendency ultimately wins out? Hard to say. In the end, there is no easy answer here.

However, this much I do know: If we simply stay in our sheltered underground, it can become an odd mix of would-be "utopia" and prison; a place where we live, still in relative privilege, proud of our marginality, able to ignore the life-or-death struggles of the mass of humanity, while claiming to somehow share them.

The affirmation and accusation implicit in "Teen Spirit's" key line, "Our little group has always been/And always will be/Until the end," contains a rich and painful paradox. On one hand, the line—often sung by Cobain in concert as "Our little tribe has always been"—is an affirmation of the human spirit to stand against conformity, to persist in a vision of another, better world. At the same time, it carries a certain resignation, as if the dream is forever doomed to be just that: an illusion, held tightly to by a tiny minority, secure in its righteous failure.

This elite notion has little place in genuine revolutionary theory or practice, as the possibility of radical transformation is ultimately for everyone—not just the chosen, lucky few—or it is not real. Indeed, this contradiction was made explicit by Cobain: "Everyone seems to be striving for utopia in the underground scene, but there are so many factions and they're so segregated that

it's impossible. If you can't get the underground movement to band together and stop bickering about unnecessary little things, then how the fuck do you expect to have an effect on the mass level?"

Cobain's insight evokes the tension at the heart of any punk/revolution equation. If punk tends to start from an emotional place of "I'm not like everybody else," how do we find common cause, even among ourselves, much less the broader world?

An even more basic question lurks just beneath the surface: Do punks want to take over and re-make the mainstream? If so, under what circumstances, and at what cost in compromises? Or do we wish to simply stay outside of "the system"? Is our essential aim to be pure or to reach people; to (objectively) change things or to (subjectively) feel superior? While granting that human motives are always mixed and mysterious to some degree, I still believe this is an essential question with which to wrestle.

Fortunately, there is another position that exists between the obvious extremes of "corporate sell-out" and "underground elitist." This stance—which I would tend to describe as "independent populist"—suggests that an artist needn't sign on with the corporate powers-that-be nor hide in an underground where, somehow, success seems to be failure.

I have seen this approach most compellingly lived out by Fugazi, although Sleater-Kinney, Ani DiFranco, Dar Williams, and others both within and beyond the punk community have also shone in this regard. As the Web makes it increasingly possible to cut out corporate middlemen, more artists seem to be moving in this direction.

Working in partnership with Postive Force DC, Fugazi has been able to skillfully balance issues of independence and interdependence, freedom and responsibility. Inclusion, not exclusion, was the aim. How large their audience might become was not predetermined, except perhaps to the degree that keeping away from the star-making machinery of MTV, major labels, merchandising, and the like has tended to reduce the likelihood of a visit to the Top Ten.

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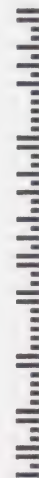
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READINGS

st not be dismissed. "Rock Against Reagan" reached tens of thousands. "Rock Against Bush CD" initiated Punk Voter campaigns. Like Burkett of NOFX, these efforts can reach millions. The initiative is a worthy effort coordinated by Bill Simmons in the city. Therefore, we must not lose sight of the work needed every day, not just on the day. Back in the mid-1980s, Dead Kennedys tried to help realize his vision of the FSU Foundation. The effort was short-circuited by legal battles with the band's former bandmates—resources from popular punk bands like Spring and Green Day were diverted to support activism around

away, another casualty of war from the early-'90s still lives on. For Punk Planet, in the sense I grew toward becoming more wise, alliances are the course of this campaign to develop a national network of groups, perhaps with a coordinating office. Bands, individuals, and especially those who have been lost—"Smells Like Teen

out your own actions, letting them stand as your message, while largely refraining from critiquing others, suggested how punk might find its way past either sell-out or self-destruction.

This experience has also pointed towards a possible resolution of a central challenge in the punk community: How can we build flexible, thriving counter-institutions that are also open to (in fact, seeking out) coalitions with other communities and networks, including those who may have chosen a more mainstream path?

The troubling narrowness of the North American independent-music underground was on display in the "Teen

easy/I here is work I have to do." Offering no easy answers, but suggesting a passionate engagement with the issues, "Axemen" is just as stirring as its more famous counterpart, and ultimately more hopeful.

As powerful and transformative as the punk scene has been for many of us, in order to truly "revolutionize," we need to step beyond. This does not mean necessarily leaving that community. However, we must at least continue to reinvent punk in ways that venture further out into the daylight, if you will.

While I prefer to work within an underground context, the broader possibilities created by punk's penetration of

Spirit" explosion, as in the FSU idea—could be channeled into this endeavor.

The aim would be not only to build active community within punk, but bridges to other communities as well. In the end, we punks must get to know and bond with others, especially the marginalized, to embody the solidarity implicit in the name itself. Together we might build power rising (in the best punk fashion) from the grassroots—the power we need to create a movement to change the overall system. ©

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mainstream, now I see argument in a more coherent. Although this debate is distract from larger issues and elitism that keep ourselves, locked in subculture.

At base, the question of punk meant to be "pop" or "elitist" (for the enlightenment has been present since our "tribe," like a sense of its power in the exclusion that we are somewhat better. The courageous doesn't have to be popular turn to a far less popular must be bad." club," once successful, "for only the chosen few.

This is deeply ironic came to punk out of a exclusion. We wanted we belonged, where we we found community. surely a healthy impulse self-affirmation can a denigration of others, gance and self-righteous.

What I am suggesting ideal of "independence even dangerous illusion too far. The DIY idea tive affirmation of ability when interpreted can with whatever you are right now." Taken

you for fear of appearing to compromise myself," a more retrogressive, anti-revolutionary approach is hard to imagine.

No, revolution is built on interdependence, the idea that people are tied together in a multitude of ways, that we need each other. While this is true on the most basic human level, it is even more so once we try to objectively assess how to build the power to challenge or even fundamentally alter the system.

It is surely true that the small, intimate scale of punk shows (as opposed to "stadium rock") and affiliated culture is not meant as an elite stance. For many punks, it is more than a statement about

tion of the human spirit to stand against conformity, to persist in a vision of another, better world. At the same time, it carries a certain resignation, as if the dream is forever doomed to be just that: an illusion, held tightly to by a tiny minority, secure in its righteous failure.

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At the same time, by making all their DC-area gigs (since 1989) benefits of one stripe or another, they have helped to take resources from within privileged contexts into places of need. Even as money was raised, the shows also fulfilled another function: raising awareness and activating people into community-justice work. A palpable sense of a community with values at odds with the dominant ones also arose, suggesting that Fugazi shows opened up "free spaces" for many.

Positive Force and Fugazi have shared an emphasis on watering the grassroots. Aware that the amount of money our events could generate was not immense—usually no more than several thousand dollars at a time, from five-dollar tickets—we have focused on directing it to small, lesser-known groups that are working on the front lines, where it might have the most impact. Such groups are often the most innovative, using creativity and hard work to make their money stretch to serve the largest number possible. We have also tried to hold the shows in community venues (church basements, union halls, community centers) where even rental fees could help struggling neighborhoods rather than fill a club-owner's pocket.

One of the lessons I re-learned from Fugazi—especially from singer-guitarist Ian MacKaye—during punk's fractious post-*Nevermind* era was simple but saving: Keep your focus on your own side of the street. The idea of checking out your own actions, letting them stand as your message, while largely refraining from critiquing others, suggested how punk might find its way past either sell-out or self-destruction.

This experience has also pointed towards a possible resolution of a central challenge in the punk community: How can we build flexible, thriving counter-institutions that are also open to (in fact, seeking out) coalitions with other communities and networks, including those who may have chosen a more mainstream path?

The troubling narrowness of the North American independent-music underground was on display in the "Teen

Spirit" video. Examine the composition of the crowd, not so different from the average punk concert: young, largely white and male, reasonably affluent, rebelling against an authority that inevitably ends; i.e., high school. While the video does suggest female empowerment and (arguably) hints at some sort of cross-racial (a T-shirt for Bad Brains, trailblazing African-American punk band, is repeatedly glimpsed) or cross-class (the janitor sympathetic to the kids but not to the principal, who is left bound and gagged at the end) coalition, the clip mostly evokes a slender slice of humanity.

The reality underlying this portrayal should be sobering to any punk straining towards a larger transformation. Olympia, Washington-based band Heavens to Betsy put it like this in "Axemen," a song that plays like a sarcastic rebuttal to "Smells Like Teen Spirit": "Do you wanna live this teenage dream/The punk white privilege scene?" This is perhaps the key question for anyone who was first spurred to activism by punk, only to eventually chafe against its often narrow boundaries.

Sharing "Teen Spirit's" soft/loud dynamics, "Axemen" conveys a desperate search for identity not predicated on oppression of others. Singer-guitarist Corin Tucker first looks around the pep rally/punk show, saddened to see "so much white." Casting about, she reaches within herself (to "cut off my privilege inside of me"), only to realize that even "this is too easy/There is work I have to do." Offering no easy answers, but suggesting a passionate engagement with the issues, "Axemen" is just as stirring as its more famous counterpart, and ultimately more hopeful.

As powerful and transformative as the punk scene has been for many of us, in order to truly "revolutionize," we need to step beyond. This does not mean necessarily leaving that community. However, we must at least continue to reinvent punk in ways that venture further out into the daylight, if you will.

While I prefer to work within an underground context, the broader possibilities created by punk's penetration of

the mainstream must not be dismissed. For example, the "Rock Against Reagan" tours of the '80s reached tens of thousands. Now the Rock Against Bush CD and tour (and associated Punk Voter campaign), driven by Mike Burkett of NOFX and Fat Wreck Chords, can reach millions. This important initiative is a worthy counterpart to similar efforts coordinated by the likes of Russell Simmons in the hip-hop community.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the activism needed every day, not just on Election Day. Back in the mid-'90s, I worked with ex-Dead Kennedys frontman Jello Biafra to help realize his dream of creating the FSU Foundation. This entity—sadly short-circuited by legal troubles with Biafra's former bandmates—briefly channeled resources from popular punk bands like Offspring and Green Day into creative grassroots activism around the country.

If FSU slipped away, another casualty of landmines left over from the early-'90s punk strife, its spirit lives on. For Punk Voter to be truly "punk" in the sense I hold dear, it must grow toward becoming "Punk Activist." If we are wise, alliances formed over the course of this campaign can be utilized to develop a national network of punk activist groups, perhaps with a small central coordinating office. Resources from bands, individuals, and institutions—especially those who have benefited from the post-"Smells Like Teen Spirit" explosion, as in the FSU idea—could be channeled into this endeavor.

The aim would be not only to build active community within punk, but bridges to other communities as well. In the end, we punks must get to know and bond with others, especially the marginalized, to embody the solidarity implicit in the name itself. Together we might build power rising (in the best punk fashion) from the grassroots—the power we need to create a movement to change the overall system. ©

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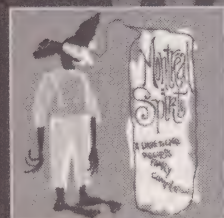
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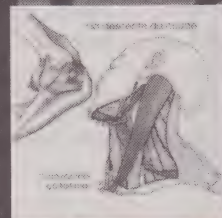
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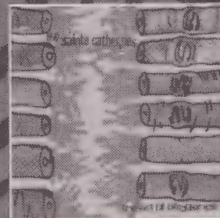
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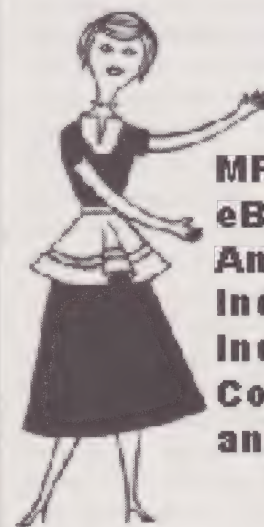
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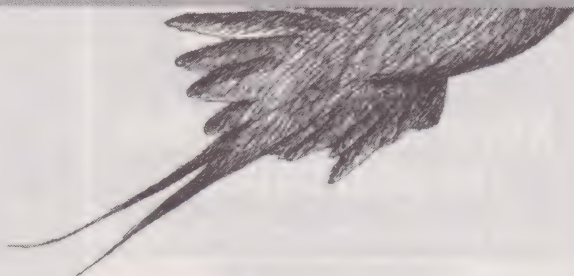
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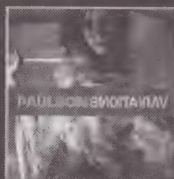


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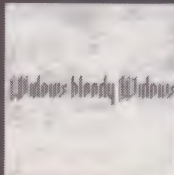


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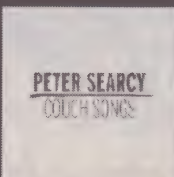
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Jesus in a Saucepan

by Matt Fedorko

I can't wash dishes anymore.

I haven't been able to for years.

Whenever I get near scalding water or wet cookware, my stomach turns and my hand hurts. I just can't do it.

I eat microwave dinners, mostly. They come in packages I can throw away easily. I buy the brand that sells the flavor separately and places it in an aisle I can never find. Not that I've tried.

I used to wash dishes professionally, if you could call it that. My rent was paid with the money from that wet, smelly job. This kid named Ricky and I worked together in the noisy recesses of a restaurant. He was a college dropout who used his shit pay to buy shit weed to get an even shittier high, and I was a college graduate who kept his diploma on his ceiling to remind himself that every day was supposed to be different because of that piece of paper. We knew what to do in the kitchen; we knew our way around. Ricky worked prep most of the time. He made salads, cut up vegetables, and portioned potatoes while I was ankle deep in dirty cups, plates, silverware, and slowly fading ideas about my future.

That future arrived, eventually, and now I scrape plastic food into my mouth with a plastic fork. At least I don't have to wash dishes anymore.

Sometimes, then, the plates wouldn't get clean. The silver would stay stained, and pots and pans just seemed to get greasier.

I hated those days.

When I had to run dishes through the tank three or four times, I would get tired quicker. I would be exhausted before the dinner rush. By the time I would get the bar glasses, smelling strongly of the alcohol saviors of so many of the bar's frequent patrons, I would be getting cold chills from the 120-degree steam.

I hated those days.

When I think about those days, one in particular, my hand still hurts. Sometimes I want to cry. Sometimes I do. No one sees me. I dry myself off afterwards. I wrap myself in large warm towels. I think, when I do, of Maria Rubo.

Maria found her Messiah staring back at her from her burrito in 1953. I saw it in a newspaper at the library. I saw the picture. I saw Maria's stony face, framed like a mug shot, with the burrito held tightly in front of her. I wonder what she was thinking when she saw it. I wonder what that burrito would've tasted like. And who would've done the dishes?

Maria Rubo probably crossed herself and uttered a prayer when her Mexican dish became a miracle.

So, when I saw Jesus looking hopefully past me, over my shoulder, from the center of a saucepan I had sent through four times, I wondered what was behind me and why this damn pan wouldn't come clean.

I wandered back to show Ricky. What else was there to do?

He was standing behind a long, smooth silver counter, slicing tomatoes. As I came closer, I watched him methodically remove the stem and put the whole tomato in the curved bay of the slicer. A second later, the tomato was gone, and he moved the slices that remained off to the side with the rest. I offered him the pan.

Ricky didn't even look up. I moved closer to show him the somewhat annoying miracle once again. Leaning forward, trying to place the pot between him and the tomatoes he was preparing to cut, I didn't realize I had also put my left hand under the efficient blades of the tomato slicer until Ricky's swift arm movement took most of it off.

No one paid attention to the pan as I slumped to the floor. Not the grill cooks who grabbed towels and rushed to my side, not the servers who ran for the phone, and not the manager who held my good hand tightly as if to say, "Don't die; you still have dishes to do."

I did, too. I had a lifetime of dishes, in one form or another.

Then, though, all I could feel was the oppressive wetness of my jeans. My legs felt crushed by them. All I wanted to do was change my pants and leave. Ricky could come too. We'd conquer the world, or at least get better jobs.

It may have happened, too, if I hadn't been bleeding so much.

My head fell to the side, ignorant to the hurried activities around me, and I saw that saucepan, rocking slowly back and forth on the floor. I could hear two words, faintly, spoken in time to its syncopated motions. Over the sound of splattering grease and the dinner rush, I could barely make out what the pan was saying. The cooks hoisted me up onto the table, peeling my wet pants from the slimy floor and shoving Ricky's tomatoes out of the way.

I looked as the saucepan tilted to the side one last time, paused, and fell back, silent. I pulled my manager close, inhaling deeply the scent of too much uneaten food that had held me for three years, and when I exhaled I carried those two words over my lips. "I quit." ©

Matt Fedorko lives in Morgantown, West Virginia with his plant, Wallace.

Jesus in a Saucepan is an excerpt from For Here Or To Go (Life In The Service Industry), edited by Leah Ryan, and forthcoming from Garrett County Press. www.gcpress.com

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Keep those submissions rolling in—and please adhere to the following guidelines: keep your work around 1,600 words or less; write your name and e-mail address on the story itself; and send files in RTF or DOC format to ppfiction@yahoo.com.

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Make your own rubber stamps!

By Trish Bendix

Stamps are fun and stress relieving. Instead of violence, try stamping some stationary, mix-tape covers, or your dog, if he's down. It'll always wash off, assuming you bathe him and it also serves as a personalized dog tag if you're monetarily challenged (or, come to think of it, maybe not).

But how do you get your stamps? Buying rubber stamps from a local craft or art store can be boring. Ordering personalized stamps can be expensive and there is never the immediate satisfaction of having that stamp right there to feed the uncontrollable urge to ink stuff up.

There's really only one good, DIY solution: make your own! Creating your own stamps fulfills the void in your creative life and will instantly serve as a charming party trick.

To personalize your very own stamp, you'll need:

An eraser
Knife or sharp tool
Marker
Ink pad

Step One: Write or draw the words or design you wish to be stamped on everything you own. Remember that your stamp is a direct reflection of yourself and should therefore reflect any interests, vices, or business ventures you so desire. If you are using words, write the letters backwards so that your stamp will be legible.

Step Two: Using a knife or sharp tool carve around the border of the letter or shape.

Step Three: Cut down the excess eraser that will not be included in the stamp until the words or shapes are raised above it, leaving only the preferred stamp design.

Step Four: Test the finished product by placing the eraser stamp

onto an ink pad color of your choice and pressing it onto paper. If something doesn't look the way it should, like the edges of the stamp are printing, cut some more of the eraser away.

Step Five: Stamp away to your heart's content—or there is nothing left unscathed of said stamping.

For the craftier and more patient stamp makers, you can make extra-fancy stamps by copying pre-printed images. Using sophisticated and important-sounding tools, you too can become a more mature stamper.

You'll need:

Linoleum Cutter
Large Eraser
Printed image (that you've xeroxed or laser-printed)
Acetone nail-polish remover
Sandpaper
Cotton Ball

Step One: Sand the eraser so that it is completely smooth. (Stamping secret: By sanding the side with the eraser's logo on it, you can conserve and use both the top and the bottom of the eraser for your stamping pleasure.)

Step Two: Place the image face down on the eraser. Soak the cotton ball with nail-polish remover, and press it against the image. If the image is not completely transferred to the eraser, add some more nail-polish remover and repeat.

Step Three: Similar to the first stamp example, cut around the image with a linoleum cutter and proceed to cut away the rest of the eraser, leaving only the elevated image.

Step Four: Try out your stamp and win the hearts of many.

Good luck and happy stamping! ©

DIY Bonus! Make an Envelope

A great way to use your stamps (or to use those extra pieces of wrapping paper or old pages from your sketchbook or whatever) is to make your own envelopes.

You'll need:

Some paper
Glue or tape
Ruler
Scissors or an X-acto knife

To get the pattern for your envelope, carefully take apart an envelope and trace its shape using your ruler onto the paper you want to use. Your run-of-the-mill triangle-folded envelope works fine, but a straight-sided envelope uses up less of your paper. Using scissors or an X-acto knife, cut out your envelope.

Insert your letter and fold the flaps down around it—side flaps first, then the bottom

and finally the top. Seal that top flap up with glue or tape. If you're planning on mailing your envelope, you'll want to tape or glue those side flaps too.

Now that you've got the basics down, you can get creative. Try stamping up a sheet of paper before you make the envelope. Or covering a sheet of paper with that pile of band stickers you have lying around. Whatever you do, have fun doing it. —Phil Angle

DIY SEX EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

A day in the life of a sex shop owner.

I had to pee badly. Real badly. I was alone in the shop on a Saturday afternoon and there was one couple in the store, making it impossible for me to slip out to the bathroom. They'd been in the shop for at least 45 minutes, the girl meticulously going through every single product one by one while her male partner stood awkwardly in the middle of the store. He waited, I suffered. People who examine every single freaking thing in the shop rarely purchase anything over a dollar, if they buy anything at all. They're curious and I appreciate that, but I *really* had to pee so I really wanted to kick them out, but I can't do that, so I tried to be patient and answer all her incessant "What's this for?" "How do you use this?" questions. After all, that is the point of having a sex-positive shop, I suppose. I always claim to be here as much to educate as to make cash, but I was in agony and she was irritating the fuck out of me.

Finally, they were not more than six feet from the door and I saw relief in sight, when the retired old man who is partly deaf and super-bored with his life walked in. He's been in before and, while I feel for him, he drives me insane. So, being the kind and loving person that everyone thinks I am, I tried my best to ignore him.

He joined the never-leaving couple by the condoms and started making some grunting noises. I finally decided that I was going to die if I didn't go to the bathroom, so I dashed out the back door and left the three of them together at the wall of prophylactics. Forty-five seconds later, I had finally relived myself, and sped back into the shop to find them all exactly where I had left them.

At last the questions lady and her bored-out-of-his-skull boy left the shop, arms full of free newspapers, matchbooks, lollipops, and "how to" product fliers. Now, in addition to old grunty, there were a couple people whom I could sense weren't going to stay the whole afternoon.

I looked up from my computer to find old dude staring right at me.

"I have a penis," he said. "I have a big penis and I need a smaller one."

Now remember, my friend here was hard of hearing so he was declaring this at a very loud volume. I could see out of the corner of my eye the other customers stifle their laughter.

"I'm sorry," I replied, "I don't quite understand what you are looking for. Do you mean you want a dildo?"

I'm not sure he heard my reply. He just looked at me very confused and said, even louder, as though I were the deaf one, "I'm impotent. I have a penis but I think it is too big. Do you have any smaller penises?" Now I actually *heard* one of the other customers bust a laugh.

"Well, we have dildos," I said as I walked around the counter to the dildo table. "What size do you want?"

His reply was "My wife died three months ago."

"I'm sorry, that must be hard" I choked out hoping to god that this wasn't going to become a therapy session, as my customer

interactions sometimes do. I quickly added, to avoid dwelling on the dead wife, "But what kind of dildo do you need?"

"I have a lady friend coming over. I think the penis that I have will be too big. Which one will be better for her? Which one will she like? I need a smaller one."

"I'M SORRY!" I screamed, "I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT SIZE PENIS SHE WILL WANT! Everyone is different and likes different things. Here is our selection, why don't you look and see if there is something that you think will work."

"Everyone is different?" He seemed confused.

"Yes, not all women like the same thing." People are often disappointed when they find that out. "I have no perfect answer for you, I'm sorry to say. That is why we carry so many different sizes and shapes."

"All women are different, I guess," he then said.

I walked away to let him ponder which sparkly silicone cock his 70-year-old fuck buddy would like, and I tried to get back to my work.

"WELL, I GUESS I'LL WAIT AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE PENIS I ALREADY HAVE!"

He bought some condoms (vegan, no less) and left. Well, sort of left: He went into the vestibule to look at the fliers that we have posted on our bulletin board. I was alone again in the shop and terrified that he would come back for a second round. People do that all the time, but never the cute, fun people. Usually it is only the irritating or kinda creepy ones who come back once they've left. Either they ask for a bag for things they didn't buy and then refuse the bag offered because it doesn't have a handle, or they offer to lick "all around the butt" of the 23-year-old who works for me ("real quick" he said, "no one would have to know"). Or when we're *really* lucky, they've gone out to their car and tried their product out and come back 'cause they just had to tell us the nipple clamps work great and they are hard already. Thanks.

This guy came back in clutching a flier for an upcoming drag king show. "Can anyone go to this?!" he yelled. "Will you be going?"

Not anymore, I thought before replying, "Uh, probably not".

"So anyone can go to this? What kind of people go?"

What am I? The goddamn senior social director? "Gay women. There are going to be mostly GAY WOMEN there."

"Oh, but do the gay women go with the men?" he asked. Was he really hoping to score at the drag king show?

"NO THEY DON'T!" I shouted, "They only go with other women. That's why they are GAY!"

"Oh" he said, a little disappointed but finally walking towards the door. "I'm old, but I guess you're never too old to learn something new"

True that. ☺

Send me in your freakin' sex questions so you don't have to suffer through another month of my ramblings. Send questions directly to me at sexlady@early2bed.com. Peace.

DIY food

EVERYTHING THAT EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

RAMEN-NESS

Ramen is the most ubiquitous food around. Most anyone can identify with the fact that instant ramen noodles are the cheapest and most convenient form of the fast home meal. When I moved into my first apartment, my dad delivered a bag of groceries: a 20-pack box of ramen and a box of moon pies. Those boxes sat in the back of my pantry for *months*. Eventually I took the moon pies to a party, where the guests were as confused as I was when my dad presented them to me. The ramen remained in the pantry as a last resort food—when I had five minutes to make some food before running out the door. Ramen remains one of those cheap alternative meals that satisfy our need for convenience and affordability. But globally, ramen has a much deeper history than as a cheap, quick cooking block of dried noodles.

The noodle itself originated in China where, until the 12th century, it was a staple food since rice was affordable only to nobility and considered a luxury. Once the Mongols conquered northern China—the country's wheat producing region—rice became the staple again and noodles became a form of street food. Since then, each branch of Asian cuisine has adopted some form of the noodle, which has hundreds of variations.

A traditional Japanese ramen dish consists of noodles and small pieces of meat and vegetables in a broth. It might be served with a miso broth, or topped with wontons. The variations are endless dependent on the region. The one constant within all varieties remains in the noodle: ramen noodles are usually prepared using a freshly made noodle, not the dried block we're familiar with.

Founder of the small family business, Nissin Foods, Momofuku Ando created the soon-to-be legendary instant ramen. Requiring no refrigeration or appliance to open it, the instant ramen was designed to be eaten anywhere, anytime simply by adding hot water. When Nissin introduced Chicken Ramen in 1958, the Japanese considered it a luxury item since fresh noodles were still a cheaper option. But soon many brands of instant ramen permeated the shelves and prices dropped. Instant ramen eventually became the new affordable alternative to fresh noodles.

In 1970, Nissin Foods introduced Top Ramen to the United States with Chicken Ramen. The timing seemed perfect for a generation of food consumers buying into the need for giant plastic tubs of margarine and long loaves of sliced, soft white bread. They were looking for the next form of food convenience and found it perfectly packaged and priced in Top Ramen and the Nissin products that followed.

Though ramen has become a staple in the world of convenient and cheap food, it remains a food containing many ingredients not so healthy for us. In order to preserve the noodles for packaging,

they're fried in palm oil. Unfortunately, palm oil contains nearly all the saturated fat anyone could ask for—around 89 percent. The accompanying package of seasoning that comes with the product is full of sodium and other concentrated and dehydrated flavors.

These points aside, ramen soup can be enjoyed by its affordability alone—eating with relish a meal that costs only 25¢. How often can we say that? With a little imagination and only a few cents more, ramen noodles can become something to actually *enjoy* and your body will thank you for the significant increase in nutritional benefits.

Ramen Miso Soup

Miso, or bean paste, is made from a mixture of soybeans, malted rice, and salt. It takes about 10 months to a year for the mixture to be ready for use due to the fermentation process. There are many types of miso from different regions in Japan. The most common kinds are red or white miso. It's really a matter of taste regarding which type you use.

1. Stock. This part is completely optional, a stock adds more flavor to the soup, but miso alone can be just as good. Skip to part two if you're not making stock.

Dashi is a soup stock made with kombu and/or dried bonito tuna flakes called *katsuobushi*. To make the stock: take one piece of kombu—about a 6-inch piece, and, if you're using *katsuobushi*, a few pinches of the flakes. Allow the ingredients to soak in 4 cups of water for 1-1/2 to 2 hours. Put the pot on low heat and bring to a boil. Once it reaches the boiling stage, remove from heat and strain the ingredients from the pot (don't forget that it's the liquid you're saving!) The stock is ready.

2. The Soup. Bring the dashi (or if you're not using stock—4 cups of water) to a boil and reduce the heat to a low simmer (never allow the soup to boil) and add ramen noodles, some chopped vegetables of your choice, and/or tofu. Some vegetable suggestions: mushrooms, cabbage, carrots, onion, peppers, or spinach. Stir the soup and check the noodles and vegetables after about 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, put about 3 tablespoons of miso in a small bowl. Remove some of the stock and add it to the miso, stirring until dissolved. Add this back to the soup mixture.

Remove from heat once noodles and vegetables are done and top with scallions or a fried egg.

It's fairly simple to create your own version of a Japanese-style ramen dish using the instant noodles you might have stashed in your pantry. I would recommend using the noodles and tossing the seasoning packet—your personal spice collection can be accessed to delicious results. If you stock your pantry with a few key ingredients, the preparation couldn't be simpler—taking just a bit more time than standard instant ramen, but tasting a whole lot better. ©

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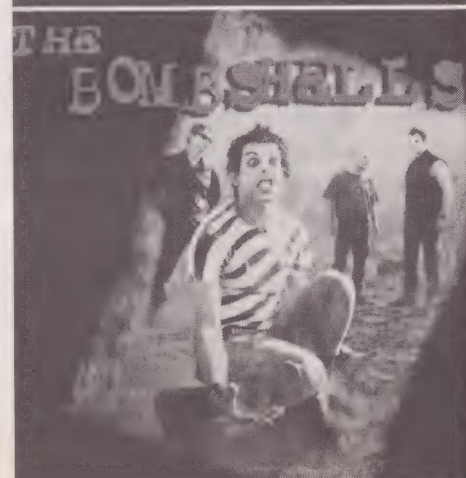
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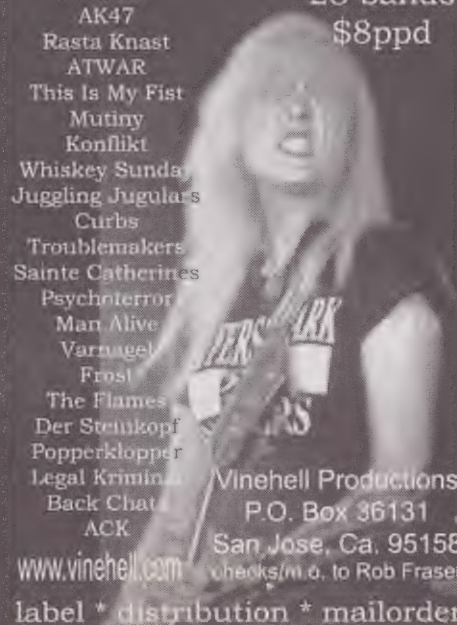
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music

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Dan Agacki (DI), Eric Action (EA), Abbie Amadio (AJA), Bill Angelbeck (BA), Jay Castaldi (JC), Carla Costa (CC), Brian Czarnek (BC), Art Ettinger (AE), Melissa Gells (MG), Julie Gerstein (JG), Jason Gooder (JG), Emily Hausman (EH), Dave Hofer, (DH), Don Irwin (DI), Ari Joffe (AJ), Tim Kuehl (TK), Dan Laidman (DAL), Ryan Leach (RL), Krystle Miller (KM), Sean Moeller (SM), Dana Morse (DM), Brian Moss (BM), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Missy Paul (MP), Rex Reason (RR), Kyle Ryan (KR), Neal Shah (NS), Matt Siblo (MS), Dan Sinker (DS), Lisa Weingarth (LW)

Edited by Kyle Ryan (KR)

A Common Ground – Waiting For A Change To Come, CD

This European screamo band has some of the same problems that plague its stateside contemporaries. While I can look past the silly lyrics considering the band is from Germany, I just can't get around the utter lack of originality and ear-piercing, high-pitched screams. Look elsewhere for your fix. (BN)
Triple Threat Records, PO Box 74007 Strathcona RPO, Calgary, Alberta, T3H 3B6, Canada, www.triplethreatrecords.com

A Faith Called Chaos – Forgive Nothing, CD

Modern hardcore with a '70s rocker-dude backbone and a metal, dueling-guitars twist. And crew choruses. And an alt-rock bend. Um, it's OK to pick just one or two styles and go with that—too much style equates with none at all. (MG)
Volcom Entertainment, 1740 Monrovia Ave., Costa Mesa, CA 92627, www.volcoment.com

A-Set – Adeline Moon, CD

A-Set is essentially a solo project, the brainchild of Albert Menduno. Deeply textured arrangements paired with pop hooks show off Menduno's mastery of music. The lyrics focus on themes of remorse and regret. This is mature indie-pop with plenty of mainstream appeal. (LW)
Luminal Records, 123 Luckie St. #1304, Atlanta, GA 30303, www.luminalrecords.com

Academy, The – S/T, CDEP

This is not good or bad. It's just another Midwest mall-punk band. There's nothing groundbreaking in the melodic "hard" guitars or pleading vocals. I think I'll pass. (MP)
LLR Recordings, #199 1566 W. Algonquin Rd, Hoffman Estates, IL 60195, www.llrrecords.com

Acid Mothers Temple – Mantra Of Love, CDEP

This two-track CD is an eclectic collection fusing psychedelics, traditional Asian vocal music, space rock and chamber music with an electric band to back it up. This ensemble from Osaka is a wonderful collection for those into the Ziadick label or a taste for the avant garde. (DM)
Alien 8, 4060 boul. St. Laurent #602b, Montreal, QC, H2W 1Y9, Canada, www.alien8recordings.com

Actionslacks – Full Upright Position, CD

A line in "This Damn Nation" talks about American popular culture being a contradiction in terms—and what a nice thought it is. Much of the nothingness in current popular culture should feel ashamed of itself for its hand in making us all lamebrains, but Actionslacks should feel extra ashamed for deriding that culture in song and then adding another stack of nothingness on top. This attempt at making brisk, insightful pop reminiscent of a gripping male Avril Lavigne, works. Think about what you just read. (SM)
The Self-Starter Foundation, PO Box 1562, New York, NY 10276, www.selfstarterfoundation.com

Advantage, The – S/T, CD

Drummer Spencer Seim of Hella and The Advantage is my new hero. The Advantage come at us with two dozen video-game theme songs. I haven't

played a video game since Atari left the 2600 format, and I think people who play video games have too much time on their hands. What does that say about people who learn a CD's worth of their theme songs? You'll have to ask the Generic, who make up the rest of The Advantage. These songs weren't meant for rock guitar and bass, and the first time I listened to the CD, the concept didn't seep into my thick skull. I thought this was a serious Hella follow-up, not some jazzy, quirky, odd-time pieces or fuzzed out rockers. Well, a couple times you might confuse the songs for a classic jazz band or banjo hoe-down. Other times you'll know it's a Hella follow-up. Either way, you won't be disappointed because the band can actually pull off this concept and leave you wanting more. Anyone got a quarter? (DI)
5 Rue Christine, PO Box 1190, Olympia, WA 98507, www.src.com

Aeroc – Viscous Solid, CD

Computerized composition with such subtle intricacies that it loses its resonance in its layered patterns. The yuppie-world-ambient crowd would appreciate it, but I can't really see anyone else lining up to buy it. (AA)
Ghostly International, 202 E. Washington, #510, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, www.ghostly.com

Alice Donut – Three Sisters, CD

What's up with all of these Alternative Tentacles bands re-emerging on other labels? The always-eclectic Alice Donut returns with their distinctly bizarre mix of punk and rock, and this comeback album will not disappoint any of their fans. (AE)
Howler Records, 31 Union Square West, Suite 9A, New York, NY 10003, www.howlerrecords.com

Alkaline Trio / One Man Army – BYO Split Series 5, CD

Chicago's ALK3 are up to their old tricks with morose songs, goth influences and alternating lead vocal duties. Somewhat surprisingly, however, it is One Man Army that steals the show with the raw blend of glam, street and punk rock. Call this one a unanimous decision. (BN)
BYO Records, PO Box 67609, Los Angeles, CA 90067, www.byorecords.com

All Is Suffering – Surge Of Medical Power / Skullbattery, 7"

After the weird, ambient-noise intro, this record turned into the fastest, heaviest hardcore record of this issue. The songs flow from minimal to chaotic without warning, and there is nothing that compares. I wish it had more than two songs. (TK)
Scenester Credentials, PO Box 1275, Iowa City, IA 52240, www.scenecred.com

All Or Nothing HC – What Doesn't Kill You..., CD

Generic hardcore with a female vocalist that sounds somewhat like Cinder from Tilt. Some cool minute-and-a-half blazers are included, but the blunt lyrics sometimes come across as preachy (not to mention the numerous suggested websites under the CD tray) and as recycled as the three riffs they're being sung over. (DH)
On The Rag Records, PO Box 251, Norco, CA 92860-0251, www.ontherag.net

Anfall – The Crusher, 7"

Anfall hail from Germany and play melodic punk rock with a slight metal edge. The title track is a cover of one of the few nonrap songs from Dee Dee Ramone's infamous *Standing in the Spotlight* LP, a strange choice to be sure. The two originals are enjoyable, though nothing earth-shaking. (JC)
G-Force Records, Wöhlerhof 4, 30900 Wedemark, Germany, www.come.to/g-forcerecords

Angry For Life – Sharks And Roaches, CD

Have Krupted Peasant Farmerz already been forgotten? I'm not sure, but I looked forward to a follow-up full-length by this San Jose-band with ex-members of that classic band. It doesn't disappoint. They've toned down the likeable female backing vocals, but they're getting darker and darker. It's a tough time for melodic hardcore bands to stand out, especially if they're not going for an ultra-commercial sound. The Scandinavian hardcore influence from their 7" is still present, and the songs are generally much faster than most of the melodic punk of today. I can't tell if there are any vocal effects being used, or if the vocalist is just really gruff. I think it's the latter, and if that's the case, he's got a good thing going, but hopefully isn't hurting himself too much. *Sharks And Roaches* is seamless as an album, with no dull songs to speak of. Seek it out. (AE)

Vinehell Productions, PO Box 36131, San Jose, CA 95158, www.vinehell.com

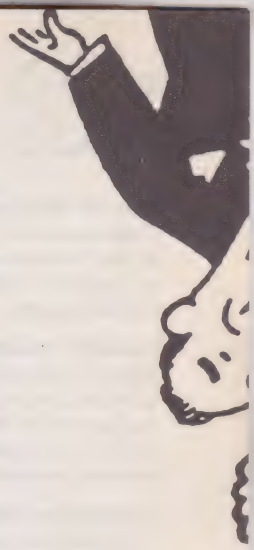
Anodyne – Salo EP, CDEP

These six songs were originally released as a 10" on Insolito Records over in Germany. I would have rather received the vinyl release, but what can you do? I guess I did get some bonus material on the CD, so I won't complain too much. These guys are out of New York, and it is so refreshing to hear some really creative hardcore coming out of that city. Anodyne sounds like they are heavily influenced by Neurosis, but they follow through with plenty of originality. These songs are as brutal as they are well-written. *Salo* is definitely worth checking out. (TK)
INIT Records, PO Box 871, Sioux Falls, SD 57101, www.initrecords.com

Anterrabae – Shakedown Tonight, CD

I am completely over the honeymoon phase with this screamo-metalcore that keeps coming from the East Coast these days. The less original it sounds, the more annoyed I am when I am forced to listen to another clone band. All right, you guys write some pretty good, melodic guitar riffs, your drummer makes some cool time changes, and your singer sounds really angry, but would it hurt to add your own touch to at least *one* song? It doesn't help that the hipster/tough guy picture on the cover make you look like a bunch of pork knobs. (TK)

Triple Crown Records, 331 West 57th St., #472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com



Antietam – Victory Park, CD

Antietam have a sort of pseudo lo-fi, Mathew Sweet-like alterna-sound with much sadder, slower undertones. Even though the recording is lo-fi, both the female and male vocals are sterile. Readers who listen to “snuggle core” or whatever other lame-ass names you come up with will probably like this. (TK) Carrot Top, 935 W. Chestnut, Suite LL15, Chicago, IL 60622, www.carrotoprecords.com

Ants, The – Victory Side, CD

Alt-country with some sojourns into indie-rock country from a Kansas songwriter and some of his buddies. The lyrics are clever, and the music is appropriately moody and textured, but the lackadaisical and at times off-key vocals start off as a stumbling block and grow into a major distraction. (DAL) Sick Room Records, PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, www.sickroomrecords.com

Apes – Tapestry Mastery, CDEP

Listening to this late at night can give you the willies. The metallic voices and realistic knocking in the first track send you to the door. It's hard to understand what the Apes want to do, but it's noisy, awkward and kind of creepy—droning, experimental art-rock is best. (SM)

Birdman Records, 441 Victory Blvd., Suite C South, San Francisco, CA 94080, www.birdmangroup.com

Aphasia – S/T, CDEP

Here is the formula for every song: singing + heavy guitars + angry singing = boring. Watch out Hoobastank, Aphasia is knocking on your door. (MP)

Joint Venture Recordings, www.jvreorderings.com, www.aphasiaonline.com

Architecture In Helsinki – Fingers Crossed, CD

A dreamy pop orchestra heavy on the xylophone, light and airy with its arrangements. This eight-piece group has written the definitive soundtrack to those summer days spent daydreaming with its mix of indie electronic instrumentation that includes synths, a glockenspiel, tuba, recorder and finger clicks. (AA)

Bar/None Records, PO Box 1704, Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.bar-none.com

Aroah – The Last Laugh, CD

Essentially, this album is a girl, Irene Tremblay, and her acoustic guitar, but it's so much more. Already a star in her native Spain, this is her sec-

ond full-length, but first in English. Upon listening to Tremblay's delicate, but intense, voice and affecting lyrics, no one could guess that English isn't her first language. Just as she masters the language, she shows the same skill and talent when it comes to the guitar. This girl knows what she's doing, and she never overdoes in each precise song. Tremblay's folk styling is exciting and invigorating. One listen to opening track “An Orchid Is A Flower That Thrives On Neglect” will pull you in and keep you there for the duration. My fingers are crossed that big things happen for Aroah. (MP)

Acuarela, PO Box 18136, 28080 Madrid, Spain, www.acuarediscos.com

Artimus Pyle – Fucked From Birth, CD

From the first few seconds after I hit play, I knew I was going to love this. Artimus Pyle has been around for some time, but apparently this is their first “official” full-length. It's heavy, fast-paced hardcore that crushes you even when it slows down. The pounding thrash parts on here will have hardcore fans jumping around their room. The guitars sound like an impending doom, and the vocals are anguished and unrelenting. Like a lot of other Prank! Records bands, the lyrics have a political bend and deal with everything from the how empty modern life can be to the corrupt and evilness of the government. This record could serve as a soundtrack to all the evilness in the world right now, and it totally captures that feeling. I don't want to make comparisons to His Hero Is Gone, but I think fans of that band would dig on AP, and I don't want them to miss out on this excellent release. I can definitely see these guys building a bigger fan base with this release. (KM)

Prank Records, PO Box 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141-0892, www.prankrecords.com

As Tall As Lions – Lafcadio, CD

How tall are most lions? Tall enough to get their noses into human heartaches. Hailing from New York, this threesome borrows background vocal stylings from early '80s dark pop to fairly successful degrees. Moody, like how they do it across the Atlantic, this debut has a racing pulse. (SM)

Triple Crown Records, 331 West 57th St., #472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

Asobi Seksu – S/T, CD

An amazing debut album from this dream-pop, shoegaze band. While singing catchy melodies over an overheated fuzz box certainly isn't new, the band bring a lot more than a watered down *Loveless* to the table. *Asobi Seksu* contains elements of early '90s Sonic Youth guitar freak-out, as well as some of the jangled guitars and irresistible vocals that made Lush's *Lovelife* so successful. Lead singer Yuki Chikudate pulls a Stereolab (of sorts) by switching off from English to Japanese on different tracks. The Japanese tracks (particularly “Umi De No Jistau”) are so catchy and melodic they should be used as motivational tapes for American high school Japanese courses. The album is rich in texture; drummer Keith Hopkin provides a fine framework for Glenn Waldman's intoxicating bass. *Asobi Seksu* is a stellar debut that should not be passed up. (RL)

Friendly Fire Records, PMB #79, 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn NY, 11211, www.friendlyfirerecords.com

Atom And His Package – Hair: Debatable, CD/DVD

Finally! After months of my complaining about Atom And His Package rip-offs, *Punk Planet* has finally sent me the real deal. A live recording and DVD of Atom's last show in Philly, *Hair: Debatable*, features 27 tracks of Atom's best, including “(Lord It's Hard To Be Happy When You're Not) Using The Metric System” and “What We Do At Christmas.” Atom, who decided to stop recording after finding out he was both diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes and about to have a baby daughter, is now working on new musical projects (like Armalite, with Paint It Black's Dan Yemin and Kill The Man Who Questions' Mike McKee). *Hair: Debatable* is a great send-off for old Atom fans and a proper starting point for those just getting into the funny, Casio-craziness of it all. (JG)

Hopeless Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409, www.hopelessrecords.com

Audio Karate – Lady Melody, enhanced CD

Audio Karate veer into post-punk territory. It's heavy on the rock and takes its cues from DC's more aggressive bands. That usually scores points with me, but this record is nothing special. The pop-punk song (track 10) sounds out of place. Features videos for two songs and an in-the-studio video. (KR) Kung Fu Records, PO Box 38009, Hollywood CA 90038, www.kungfurecords.com

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive (CDs, CDRs and vinyl only—so long as they come from a label that isn't owned/partially owned by a major label), but we reserve the right not to review something we feel isn't appropriate for *Punk Planet*. Also, due to the volume we receive, some records fall through the cracks. Feel free to send us your record(s) for review (4229 N. Honore St., Chicago IL 60613), but expect up to a five-month lag time for it to appear in the magazine. So send stuff EARLY, and include any and all contact information. CDRs that aren't advance promo copies from labels end up in our demo section. All reissues are also in their own section. Records marked with a little ear (👂) are “highlighted” reviews, which means reviewers found them especially noteworthy (not necessarily good or bad). Finally, please keep in mind that if you send us your record, we might not like it. The review is merely one person's opinion, written without God's endorsement. Any questions or concerns can be directed to Kyle Ryan at reviews@punkplanet.com. Please DO NOT CALL the office, as Kyle is not there full-time. Thanks!



Avatars, The – Wait / There Was A Time, 7"

A mediocre single from this Ann Arbor band. Musically, the group brings a cool Johnny Thunders inspired sound. Unfortunately, the somewhat uninspired vocals don't quite match the above-par music. (RL)

Self-released, www.theavatars.us

Avengers, The – The American In Me, CD

All right, more high-quality studio and live stuff from the legendary Avengers. The studio stuff sounds great, with killer versions of the title track, "We Are The One," "White Nigger" and "Uh-Oh." The live stuff is a little low-fi, but aptly captures a band just as their wave was cresting. (JC)

DBK Works, PO Box 2947, San Francisco, CA 94126, www.buynit.com/dbk.html

Avoid One Thing – Chopstick Bridge, CD

One of the most annoying parts of the reviewing process is always having to read a band's bio. Ask any *Punk Planet* reviewer here, and he'll shiver at the thought of these overblown, self-aggrandizing pieces of propaganda. Not only are they generally used as an easy way for reviewers to write about something they've never listened to, but they also serve as bogus platform for publicists and record labels to liken their band to a much more impressive one. In my mind, Avoid One Thing, who gained some notoriety through the inclusion of Joe Gittleman of The Mighty Mighty Bosstones (an all-time favorite, I will admit) had a lot to live up to from their bio's comparisons: Hüsker Dü, The Pixies, The Cure and The Replacements. Truth be told, *Chopstick Bridge* doesn't come close to sounding like any of these bands, and that's fine, but this band's publicist has delusions of grandeur. Musically, AOT takes their sound from a couple of other notable bands, No Use For A Name and Social Distortion, to name the most prominent. While these comparisons are certainly a lot less glamorous and trendy, they are definitely not as misleading or self-serving. Decent, but a bit bland. (MS)

Side One Dummy, PO Box 2350, Los Angeles CA 90078 www.sideonedummy.com

Awkward Romance, The – Covington, CD

Another band seemingly content with existing on that ever-smudged border between power pop and pop punk. The sound and the use of dual vocals brings to mind Midtown, so expect accessible melodies, decent writing and just enough hooks to keep you listening until the final song. (BN)

Self-released, www.theawkwardromance.com

AWOL – Another Way Of Living, 7"

Whoa, this is quite a surprise. Six songs of awesome, tough hardcore from this Syracuse band. The singer sounds a lot like Choke with this deep, rough bark, and the music is top-notch. There's a nice, thick sound to this. The guitars are fast and heavy without being too simple, and there are some cool bass lines throughout the record. Plus, they cover a fucking Life Sentence song! How cool is that? Sometimes it's hard to describe good hardcore because it's just something you feel. These guys definitely feel it, and I'm feelin' this. And I'm feeling hungry. (NS)

Reaper Records, PO Box 2935, Liverpool, NY 13089, www.reaperhardcore.com

Axes Of Evil – Married To America, CD

Finally America's answer to Propagandhi. Despite the really bad band name and a cover that looks like an oi record, this high-energy political-punk band is chock full of '80s metal guitar licks, break-neck speed and sing-alongs that make it top shelf. Recommended. (DM)

New Regard Media, PO Box 5706 Bellingham, WA 98227, www.newregardmedia.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

Humpers, Positively Sick On 4th Street. I feel old now. After wondering whether this record is 5 years old, I discovered it's actually more than 10 years old. So I suppose those who let the Hives introduce them to rock 'n' roll haven't heard the New Bomb Turks, Devil Dogs or the Humpers. Those three bands in the early '90s saved my love for music. I was tired of the first wave of emo, the Sub Pop scene was tapped out, Lookout was losing it best bands, and Rip Off Records was just starting. The Humpers are probably the least known of the above bands, until they signed to Epitaph and lost their magic. This album is my favorite, though many can argue *Journey To The Center Of Your Wallet* as a contender as well. Four tracks in particular make this disc a must-own: "Hey Shadow," "Apocalypse Girl," "Cops And Robbers" and a cover of the MCS's "Rocket Reducer." This is a sing-along band with a Johnny Thunders-guitar-driven lead and the urgency and swagger of a New York Dolls. I'm sure they drank way too much, were assholes to people they didn't know and half their licks and hooks are stolen outright (the way rock 'n' roll has always been), but it doesn't matter. All these "punk-rock-n-roll" bands that are on the radio should give the Humpers a dollar from each disc sold. That way they can finally pay their bookies, back-taxes and their bartender.

Last five records on my turntable: Wire, *Chairs Missing*; Distraction, *More Trouble At The V*; Buff Medways, *Christmas Single*; Ponys, *Big Neck Single*; and Adverts, *One Chord Wonder*.

Backstabbers Inc. – Kamikaze Missions, CD

I didn't expect to like these guys as much as I did: starting out full-on with blast beats and then a supercharged rhythm and drop-tuned instruments. It reminds me of His Hero Is Gone and From Ashes Rise. These songs have an aggression that most heavy bands just can't seem to make and a sense of melody that rarely is seen in this style. Backstabbers Inc. don't seem to attempt at sounding heavy, but they add a sort of pop sensibility, like Hüsker Dü did for hardcore in the '80s, when everyone was just replicating the sound of the current scene. This is a great band and a solid release. (TK)

Trash Art, PO Box 725, Providence, RI 02901, www.soundandculture.com

Bad Religion – The Empire Strikes First, CD

At this point, you know what to expect with Bad Religion: gang-choir vocals, politically conscious lyrics filled with multisyllabic turns of phrase and adrenaline-raising tempos. "Los Angeles Is Burning" is the standout track with relative newcomer Brooks Wackerman's drumming on display. They're not reinventing the wheel, just releasing *another* solid record. (RR)

Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Bare, Bobby Jr. – From The End Of Your Leash, CD

Honestly, I haven't been all that impressed with Bobby Bare Jr.'s musical output thus far. However, this release is a vast improvement from his earlier work. There's still a fair amount of singer-songwriter wankery, but even a few of the softer tunes are more tolerable, if not downright good ("Things I Didn't Say" and "The Terrible Sunrise"). What are really worth a listen are the groovy, Creedence Clearwater Revival-type rockers. It's cool to hear Bob's tunes with broader arrangements, more instrumentation and a nice, hard backbeat. C'mon Bobby, do one full album of rockin' stuff! Tunes like "Valentine" and "Strange Bird" prove he's got it in him—he's just gotta let it out. (AJ)

Bloodshot, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60618, www.bloodshotrecords.com

Bastard Noise – Mutant, CD

This is a shrill collection of electrical feedback, chirps and high-pitched whines with some ugly lyrics hidden deep in the four tracks here. Almost an hour of Man Is The Bastard fun here. My ears are bleeding. (DM)

Manufacture, www.noiseweb.com/manufacture

Bats & Mice – A Person Carrying A Handmade Paper Bag Is Considered As a Royal Person, CDEP

Four mellow tracks that flirt with free-range noise but never strike a dissonant note. It's poppy and coated in milky melodies to make it go down easy. The instrumental breaks are the best, with their tightly knit noodling and restrained power. (DAL)

Lovitt Records, PO Box 248, Arlington, VA 22210-9998, www.lovitt.com

Battles – EP C, CDEP

After I first saw Battles live, I started to make up cheesy commercials for the band: "Battles, the future of music...Today!" And it wasn't in jest. With Ian Williams (Don Caballero) on guitar/laptop/synth keys, Tyondai Braxton (solo) on guitar/synth keys, John Stanier (Helmet) on drums and David Konopka (Lyny) on bass, it's hard to ignore the band's pedigree. But it could never predict their sound. Anyone can add a laptop to rock, but few can call it composition. Commercial Two: "Battles is the New Noise." This EP's five tracks are modern symphonies: bass and the trip-tempo timing of the drums set a dark, driving tone; broken and brief guitar riffs add jagged textures; and synthesizers introduce new melody lines in their disguise as

piano and third guitar. The EP's tone is mischievous and modern. This fan considers it a call for a prog rock redux. (CC)

Monitor Records, PO Box 2361, Baltimore, MD 21203, www.monitorrecords.com

Bedouin Soundclash – Sounding A Mosaic, CD

Obviously, this band worships The Police. While the drummer channels Stewart Copeland, the singer pulls the best reggae voice he can for being Canadian. For the most part, this is acoustic reggae, with some drum 'n bass beats on a few songs for fun. I've heard worse. (MP)

Stomp Records, 78 Rachel E., Montreal, Quebec, H2W 1C6, Canada, www.stomprecords.com

Belvedere – Fast Forward Eats The Tape, CD

Aggressive and blazingly fast skate punk with melody and hooks aplenty. Yeah, you've heard it before, but these guys do it really well. If you're not convinced, check out "Unplugged" and "Bad Decisions" before setting this one aside. (BN)

Union Label Group, 78 Rachel East, Montreal, QC, H2W 1C6, Canada, www.unionlabelgroup.com

Beret! – Fromage De La Rue, CD

When I saw this I knew it had to be the first thing I reviewed. Since France has become one of our government most hated countries, what could be a better gimmick than a hardcore/heavy metal band dressed up like French stereotypes? Could there be something more to this band than berets, striped shirts and fake moustaches? Well, the answer is, unfortunately, no. Reading the liner notes made me laugh, but this sounds like so many other detuned heavy hardcore bands. Merde! Je desire aimer cet! (Excuse my long unused French.) (JG)

Self-released, www.angryfrenchmen.com

Billy Club Sandwich – Chin Music, CD

NYHC in the vein of Biohazard. They use samples before almost every song, which is a little annoying. I can't tell if they're really trying to be hard, or if it's all in good fun. Not bad, not great. (DA)

Inner Strength, 70 Johns St., #403, Newburgh NY 12550, www.innerstrengthrecords.net

Bizarros – Can't Fight Your Way Up Town From Here, CD

Of all the pockets of underground music to germinate in the first wave of punk rock, the Ohio's scene is probably the most overlooked. Akron's Bizarros are at best a footnote in most of the music as sociological study texts that have popped up. Twenty-plus years since their demise, they've resurrected with a full length of new, vital music in tow. While these songs would have fit right in if played in 1977, it's not a stale nostalgia trip or paint-by-numbers rehash. The prepunk influences of psyche and garage are in full force, filtered through Stooges stomp and Velvets vibe. Singer Nick Nicholas even shares Lou Reed's talk/sing delivery. (RR)

Clone Records, PO Box 6014, Akron, OH 44312

Black Cat Music – October, November, CD

Playing dark, moody, punk rock that's a bit goth in parts, Black Cat Music are a pretty aptly named band. The rhythm section holds things steady as the guitars, vocals, and keyboards go off every which way, yet somehow everything comes together to form powerful, intricate, melodic tunes. (JC)

Lookout Records, 3246 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Black Cougar Shock Unit – S/T, CD

Supergroup alert! BCSU is composed of members of Discount and Panthoro UK United 13, among others. It makes me think of Jawbreaker and Radon.

There were songs that got my foot tapping and a few that had me skipping ahead to the next track. "Iron Cobra" is the standout track. (DA)

Newest Industry, Unit 100, 61 Wellfield Road, Cardiff, CF24 3DG, UK, www.thenewestindustry.com

Black Cross – Widows Bloody Widows, CD

This is a collection of some Black Cross odds and ends, including EPs and outtakes. I think I like this CD even better than their first album, *Art Offensive*. These tracks are a little more raw and varied. Some songs are faster, bringing to mind By The Grace Of God. Then there are other songs that are more throbbing, tense and chaotic. Of course, there's still a heavy Swiz/lat-er Black Flag sound that isn't totally reliant on either band for new ideas. Black Cross is powerful, dynamic and melodic in their own way. They show that hardcore can still grow without losing focus from its original blueprint of anger, emotion and intensity. (NS)

Initial, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Black Dice – Creature Comforts, CD

Black Dice may just be the reincarnation of the Beach Boys—during their drug years, of course. Somewhere in the scramble of noise is the timbre and melodies of psychedelic rock. Black Dice just distorts and dements it. The rhythms pick-up slowly, but before they're fully formed, they dissolve, like sugar, into a sea of effects—a sweet, synthetic, distant voice or the screech and squawk of birds—and that's their forté. The only consistency in their series of recordings is that it's always like a soundtrack for the flight of birds in their V formation, held together sonically with the occasional piercing shrieks of the straggler. *Creature Comforts* meanders out of the winter and into the spring. The tone is tender and evocative, as if the birds are exchanging greetings with robots in their own secret language. (CC)

DFR Records, www.dfarecords.com

Black Eyes – Cough, CD

Black Eyes are back with their posthumous sophomore release that further belies the notion that they should be lumped in with the no-wave/electro-clash craze. A far more experimental record than their *S/T* album—a mass of prog-rock excursions and noise excesses—*Cough* will alienate as many listeners as it will convert. The trade-off vocals, keyboards, sax and percussive drive still make their marks, but you can expect a more cohesive overall groove, thwarting any tendency toward track skipping (sorry, no "Deformative II"). If anything, this record proves that you can't fully appreciate something until it's gone. Best sax I've had in awhile, fellas. (JG)

Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington DC 20007, www.dischord.com

Black Furies, The – S/T, CD

This sounds a lot like other punk/hard rock 'n' roll bands like the Hellacopters or the Spitfires. Unfortunately, The Black Furies lack the over-the-top drive of those bands. Some of the problem is that this CD suffers from sterile production and unoriginal songwriting. (JIG)

Take Root Records, www.takerootrecords.com

Black Nasa – Deuce, CD

You'd probably expect spacey music from a stoner rock band called Black Nasa. They don't fail to deliver. The riffs are big, and the grooves are deep, but it's all a little too slick to provide a perfect space rock head-trip. (RR)

Meteor City, PO Box 40322, Albuquerque, NM 87196, www.meteorcity.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adoryzie (AA)

Songs: Ohia, Axxess & Ace. Jason Molina, the singular force behind Songs: Ohia, lives in a world of hurt. If it ain't problems with girls, its trouble with women and vice versa. His haunting voice, accompanied by minimalistic arrangements, echoes in your brain. It's soothing like a shot of whiskey chased by shot of vodka, burning the back of your throat and warming your heart. Axxess & Ace's nine songs clock in at just under 42 minutes, but will continue to ring in your ear as long as you're longing for more. "Captain Badass" is undoubtedly the most stunningly romantic ode to the booty call with its slow and sweltering rhythm so suited for knockin' boots. Much of the record delves into the abyss of love lost with "Red Head," "Goodnight Lover," "Champion" and "Love and Work." Molina, straightforward in his words, wails bitterly, "Be mine/Till you're reminded of something better/until it comes along." ("How To Be Perfect Men") Even when he is most pained, you still wanna be near him because his pain doesn't reveal itself in a messy diatribe of desperate whining. Molina's brand of desperate whining manifests as seductive songs tinged with hope and soaked in liquor.

Holla Back Ya'll: The Dismemberment Plan, *Emergency & I*; Cursive, *The Ugly Organ*; Lucero, *That Much Further West* (reviewed this issue); Deerhoof, *Apple O*; Cain Marko, *Mustache Rodeo*.

Black Time – Blackout, 12"

This is incredibly trashy, primal garage rock. The recording is so lo-fi it sounds like the Velvet Underground playing Stooges songs on equipment borrowed from Fat Albert's junkyard band. Now that's *trashy*. Although not without its charm, it gets fairly annoying sitting through a full LP of this stuff. (JC)

Self-released, therhythmhive@hotmail.com

Blackouts, The – Living In Blue, CD

Driving, blue-collar rock out of central Illinois. The songs tend to go on a bit too long, and the singer reminds me of a young Bono for some reason. It's pretty good stuff, but they could stand to sharpen up the songwriting and trim some of the fat. (JC)

Lucid Records, 665 Timber Hill Road, Deerfield, IL 60015, www.lucidrecords.com

Blake, Robert – Still Kissing Last Night's Stained Lips, CD

Robert Blake falls smack dab in between Tom Waits and Vic Chestnut, delivering earnest folk- and country-tinged melodies with introspective lyrics sung with fervor and conviction. "One Monday Night" and "Forgiveness, Again" best capture the essence of this record, so give those a try first. (BN)

Art of the Underground, 3234 Main St. Upper, Buffalo, NY 14214 www.artofunderground.com

Blam, The – Caveat Emptor, CD

Memorable after only a couple listens, *Caveat Emptor* is filled with sparse but catchy melodies that are delivered with subtlety. At their essence, The Blam play bare-bones pop-rock with a hint of the British that grows on you after awhile. (AJA)

Mootron Records, 2658 Griffith Park Blvd., #370, Los Angeles, CA 90039, www.mootron.com

Blond On The Wall – S/T, CD

This band is really shitty (in a *Pink Flag* kind of way). Lo-fi all the way, with tinges of Kim Gordon's self-assurance, The Peechees' snotty vocals, The Hot Snakes' energy and (insert any post-punk band here) its rhythm section. Sound like a best of list? That's because it rules. (RL)

The Social Registry, 362 Atlantic Ave., Suite 115, Brooklyn NY, 11217, www.thesocialregistry.com

Blue Collar Convicts – S/T, CD

Blue Collar Convicts are not behind bars, their frontman explains, just trapped in hard labor jobs and unfashionable lives. This EP isn't overtly political, and it isn't beer-soaked escapism, either. It's five rocking songs with plenty of energy but a dark soul. The surfy instrumental "Shoreline Dreams" is just great. (DAL)

Et Cetera Records, 118 Shawnee Rd., Pepperell, MA 01463

Blueprint Car Crash – Rhetoric Of A Marionette, CD

Aside from some phenomenal drumming, what we've got here is cookie-cutter, whiny, RPG hardcore. In most cases, tech-metal and hooka-doused jam-band material should be kept apart. No one likes jug-jug guitars mixed with flute solos. Stop trying to play copycat with the Mars Volta; you're nowhere near good enough. (BM)

The Militia Group, 1215 North Red Gum, Suite L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.themilitiagroup.com

Bonds, The – Not A Phase, CD

At first glance I thought this was going to be mosh metal, but I was totally wrong. Instead, it's somewhat melodic straight-edge hardcore. The Bold and SSD shirts should have clued me in right away. They don't break any new ground, but they pull off this sound well. (DA)

Tuned To You Records, 1026 de La Voie Ouest Levis, QC G6Z 1J9, Canada, www.tunedtoyou.com

Boyzazz – In The City Tonight, CD

In The City Tonight adds an electro touch to T. Rex and Bowie. Unfortunately, the addition of echo (AKA the drum machine) makes this record sound as alive as *Cut The Crap*. That reminds me, I could go for some *Sandinista*! right about now. (RL)

Frenetic Records, PO Box 640434, San Francisco, CA 94164, www.freneticrecords.com

Brandtson – Send Us A Signal, CD

Here's an alt-rock combo, with that distorted but inoffensive guitar sound, churning out power-pop. There are some decent instrumental passages that change it up a bit and stop you from thinking that it all sounds the same. It's when they slow down that they sound most original. (BA)

The Militia Group, 1215 N. Red Gum, Ste L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.themilitiagroup.com

Brazil – A Hostage And The Meaning Of Life, CD

Hopefully another dodo bird on punk's Galapagos Island: prog-metal punk that sounds a little like At The Drive-In and a little ridiculous to anyone who grew up listening to punk and hardcore. I guess it's brave to forgo most punk conventions, but these lyrics aren't making this over-indulgent musical pill any easier to swallow. (MS)

Fearless, 13772 Goldenwest St., #545, Westminster, CA 92683, www.fearlessrecords.com

Break-Up, The – She Went Black, CDEP

Four guys and one gal have formed one heck of a group after their other bands and relations had gone bad. Five songs of fun and catchy garage-type rock 'n' roll. The keyboards are a nice touch. (BC)

www.thebreak-upmusic.com

Breakdown, The – Solid Gold EP, CDEP

A little rough around the edges sound-wise, *Solid Gold* is a decent, modern-sounding hardcore recording that thankfully owes more to Black Flag than Hatebreed. The instrumental track has to go, however. (MS)

Noisemaker Records, PO Box 71208, Shorewood, WI 53211, <http://records.noise-maker.com>

Breakdown, The – S/T 7"

I try to avoid using the term "screamo," but it's hard to do with this band. The most appealing part of the 7" is the instrumental piece, "I'm Crazy," where you can hear how talented these musicians are. This band would do better to go entirely instrumental or find a singer that can occasionally vary his/her vocal quality. (LW)

Noisemaker Records, PO Box 71208, Shorewood, WI 53211, <http://records.noisemaker.com>

Breaker! Breaker! – Where All The Birds Yell, CD

Punchy, trendy-sounding dance punk out of...you guessed it, Brooklyn! All L train jokes aside, these guys are relatively interesting and do a pretty good job at making such covered ground interesting. I think someone needs to send a bass player to that damn borough. (MS)

Velocorecords, www.velocorecords.com

Breezy Porticos – Keep It Crisp, CD

Breezy Porticos play imaginative, light pop songs with strange, playful lyrics about love and music. Song titles include "Six Flags Over Nowhere" and "Gee, Your Math Looks Terrific," but this isn't pretentious music for grownups. It's fun, unassuming, gentle pop. (AE)

Best Friends Records, PO Box 48214, Denver, CO 80204, www.bestfriendsrecords.com

Brian_and_Chris – S/T, 12"

Brian_and_Chris combine organic (guitar, drums) and digital (synthesizer, mixer) elements to create electronica for experimental post-rockers.



Interesting conceptually, but bland in execution. One song's structure makes the others predictable, despite the varied instrumentation. For a duo with experimental aims, this 12" plays it a little too safe. (CC)
Dielectric Records, 472 1/2 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland, CA 94609, www.dielectricrecords.com

Broken Heroes / Toughskins – split, 7"

The Broken Heroes' side of this old-school split consists of a song about beating up hippies and a more typical offering with snotty vocals and a lot of anger. The Toughskins play a more straight-forward street-punk style with an occasional solo to spice things up. (BN)
Headache Records, PO Box 204, Midland Park, NJ 07432, www.headacherecords.com

Brueggen, Carl Henry – Cinzano & Cocaine, CDEP

Carl Henry Brueggen orchestrates three likeable, calypso-inspired, tropical numbers that are nostalgic in their allusion to 1950s America, giving way to the image of suburban white folks surrounding themselves in pastels and exotica. Enjoyable. (AJA)
Self-released, 446 North Wells, #316, Chicago, IL 60610

Brueggen, Carl Henry– Idler, CDEP

Squeaky-clean bossanova harking back to the 1950s produced by a 14-piece band playing organic instruments to create an ultra-warm sound. Brueggen is the guitarist. Keep in mind, this isn't one of those ironic things; it's real tropical music. (DAL)
Self-released, 446 North Wells, #316, Chicago, IL 60610

♫ Buchershop Quartet, The – The Right Of Spring, 2xCD

As far as concept albums go, I am rarely impressed past the explanation of the concept. Let's start with disc one. A modern interpretation of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite Of Spring* sounds like a cool idea, and my hat is off to these guys for translating classical music to modern instruments, but I was definitely not their target audience. They must have spent a ridiculous amount of time on this, but since I [gasp] have never heard the entire original, so it just sounds like a lot of experimental wanking. I can say without a doubt that these guys can play their instruments very well, and anyone who has heard this classic piece will most likely be more impressed than I. Disc two has an entirely different feel: It's mostly DJs lacking creativity, making beats over the same melody. There is some killer MC'ing (Offwhite, Mestizo and Andre) with some amazing lyrics, but musically, far from impressive. As a whole, I guess I could classify this as an incredible release in theory, but when it came down to actually listening to it, I just wanted to turn it off. (TK)

Galapagos4, 1457 Rascher apt 2, Chicago, IL 60640, www.galapagos4.com

♫ Bucks, The – Fair Enough!, CD

Imagine a boozy, beely, European version of The Fall churning out power-pop dirges way after closing time at a smoke-filled discotheque. This is a really dynamic record with original musical touches, bursts of fist-pumping energy, taut instrumental interludes and experiments with different genres, all held together by the singer's confident crooning. The lyrics, by turns belted out, winkingly whispered and sweetly snarled in lightly accented English, are cool, if odd: "Why is the banana bent/ well it grew up in the wind." Just who are The Bucks? Veteran Swiss rockers who've been at this for a long time, at least that's what I culled from some quick research. Their mastery shows on this record. And hey, it's a testament to their shreaddaciousness that I took the time to do all that Internet research, which included ample use of the Google language translator, which gave me

lines like this from the German bio on their homepage: "For RAMS the origin of the Punk skirt was?die rescue of the Rock?n?Roll? After legendary appearances as for instance that with The Clash in Zurich, album production and Live appearances in London and unfortunately also the grind followed." (DAL)
Phonag Records, Postfach 322, 8406 Winterthur, Switzerland, www.phonag.ch

Burden Brothers – Buried In Your Black Heart, CD

Straight-up rawk music, slickly produced with a bit of grit. The main dude, Vaden Lewis, used to be in The Toadies. The Bros swagger, do a few rave-ups, a few faux country-rock power ballads like Guns N' Roses used to do. It all reeks of "We wanna be rockstars, dude!" (AJ)
Trauma Records, 15165 Ventura Blvd., Suite 320, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403, www.traumarecords.com

♫ Burn Your Wishes / The Awards – split, CD

Wow, I don't think I've ever taken so many notes on a record I considered so terrible. At the top of them is "PAINFUL," and I don't mean that in a wow-this-is-so-moving kinda way. Burn Your Wishes play radio-friendly screamo that occasionally sounds dangerously close to nü metal. The vocals, when they aren't screamed, sound like they're from a pitch-corrected pop-punk band. Even though their first song ("Burn Your Wishes") has a great, melodic ending, BYW proceeds into the acoustic "Yesterday Could Last An Eternity," about being lonely on tour. It's essentially an emo "Home Sweet Home," with terrible, saccharine lyrics that make me want toretch. They don't learn their lesson, either, as the fourth track is another acoustic atrocity. The Awards are also bad, though in a different, more "alternative" way. The lyrics, like those of BYW, are terrible: "I miss/ your kisses" (track six) or "take my hand/ take me away/ let's fly away" (track nine). These nine ready-for-radio tracks lack any hint of originality; each lyric and note is so predictable you could see it coming a mile away. It's awful, though your local alt-rock station will probably eat it up. (KR)

Milk & Cookies Records, CP 48038, Québec City, QC G1R 3R5, Canada, www.milkandcookiesrecords.com

♫ Burning Idols – S/T, CD

Now here's a new band to keep your eye on. The Florida-based trio of Patricia Gomez (vocals/guitar), Pablo Lopez (bass/vocals) and Angie Terry (drums) play a dark, heavy style of rock that references bands like Jucifer, Throwing Muses, Sonic Youth and Nirvana, while still retaining their own unique voice. That's not to say some of the tunes couldn't use some work. There are a few weak cuts mixed among the 10 tracks on this, their debut release. Considering they've only been together for a short period of time, and, by their own admission, they're still relative novices on their instruments, I gotta cut them some slack. That, and I'll bet they really put it over hardcore live, too. Strong tunes like "Rocket," "Zero" and "Tide" suggest that this band has the potential to create some exhilarating sounds in the future. (AJ)

Elefant Rising Records / self-released, www.burningidols.com

Butane, Wayne– Sucks Bigtime, CD

Wayne Butane puts his mixer to work melding commercial, movie, song, radio and television sound-bites into mangled, hyper-speed narratives. The result is a mind fuck of free associations. *Sucks Bigtime* is definitely an experience, though the potential for greatness is shot by Wayne Butane's penchant for toilet humor. (CC)

Flaming Canine Records, 603 N. Orange St., Mesa, AZ, 85201, www.flamingcanine.com

Broken Heroes / Caught in the Fall

Butchies, The – Make Yr Life, CD

I'd never heard The Butchies before, despite seeing their name around for years. I was expecting bratty riot-grrl punk action, but the fourth Butchies album is beautiful indie-pop-punk with lovely harmonies, great lyrics and—most important—catchy songs. The production is big and full without sounding too slick. Great stuff. (JC)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Call And Response – Winds Take No Shape, CD

Soothing and comforting like an old shirt or a worn pair of shoes. This female-fronted five-piece is chock-full of harmonies, with a laid-back sound kind of similar to Stereolab. It's nice, not my thing, but very nice. (DM)

Badman Recordings Co., www.badmanrecordingco.com

♫ Camp, Andi / We're From Japan – You Are The Vehicle, Split CDEP

Andi Camp, former frontwoman of Ribbon Fix, along with the aid of drummer Joey Prude, beautifully mirrors the movements of life with the deep swells and falls of her melancholic, piano-driven pop. Her talents are remarkable, furthered by the disc's hand-packaged and twine-bound artwork. We're From Japan's instrumental songs are texturally layered and elegantly constructed. Drawing influences from the mixable, yet diverse likes of Tristeza, the Idles of Space and Built To Spill, We're From Japan combines deep, atmospheric stylings with sugar-coated guitar melodies. The split contains two songs from each group plus a collaborated cover of the Boss' "I'm On Fire." I'd recommend this one for late afternoons in the company of hot tea, whiskey or both. High fives all around. (BM)

Grafton Records, 5251 NE 33rd Ave., Portland, Oregon 97211

Cape, Joey / Sly, Tony – Acoustic, CD

The lead singers from the California punk bands Lagwagon and No Use For a Name team together for acoustic versions of their songs, adding violins, piano and banjo in parts. It's more like having two EPs with six songs apiece. It is likely a must for fans of these guys. (BA)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 13690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690, www.fatwreck.com

Carcass – Choice Cuts, CD

Carcass' greatest "hits" finally gets the green-light. It's a good overview of their career, from their groundbreaking gore-grind days to their seminal melodic days and includes both Peel Sessions from 1989 and 1990. Should you not already own these songs, this is a great place to start. (DH)

Earache Records, 43 West 38th St., New York, NY 10018, www.earache.com

Casket Lottery, The – Smoke And Mirrors, CDEP

TCL's swan song, this CD is what you expect: rockin' post-punk in the vein of Small Brown Bike, old Jimmy Eat World, etc. It's good, it's solid, it's tight, it's nothing new or terribly memorable. Track two, "On The Air," is a well-written take on the hackneyed "anti-radios" song. (KR)

Second Nature, PO Box 413084, Kansas City, MO 64141, www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Casper And The Cookies – Oh!, CD

This record is shiny, glossy and poppy. Think Southern California beach tunes with some quirky electronic parts. There are a lot of dancey songs on this, and the lyrics are happy and funny. This record will put you into a good mood—very creative. (EH)

Happy Happy Birthday to me Records, PO Box 1035, Panama City, FL 32402, www.htbtbm.com

Caught In The Fall – Act IV, CD

The record starts out with a wall of chaotic guitars and frantic screaming, but

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Agacki (DA)

Dag Nasty, Field Day. I'm sure some of the older guys will be cringe when they read my choice, but I have to say that it isn't as bad as people make it out to be. The day I bought this album, I ran into a friend of mine that's a big Dag Nasty fan. When I told him I bought it he said, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. It's awful." Sure, *Field Day* is way too produced and it has some pretty ridiculous lyrics at times, but there are some amazing songs on it. My point can be verified by various live recordings from this era (thanks Souleseek). "Trouble Is" and "Things That Make No Sense" are as good or better than anything on *Wig Out At Denkos*. "The Ambulance Song" always makes me smile with its clean blues guitar and cheesy lyrics, "I leave this note/ I need a couple of hours/ maybe a J or two to calm down." I wish I would have heard this in 1988 when it came out. I'm sure it would have blown my 7-year-old world. If you don't believe me that this album is great, go take it up with one of *Field Day*'s cult followers at the Dag Nasty message board.

If you doubt it, let me remind you: Mission Of Burma, OnoffOn, TSOL, Beneath The Shadows, Big Star, #1 Record/ Radio City, Insted, Proud Youth: 1986-1991, Current, Discography.

then Caught In The Fall takes a wrong turn by trying to be melodic and having pleading, singing vocals. They need to stick with the chaotic stuff; it's a lot stronger. This record is boring, and, at times, it sounds really weak. (EH)
Wristwatch Records, 3724 Jackson St., Apt. 306, Omaha, NE 68105

Ceiling Fan - Hot Streets, CD

Nice deadpan band name. The songs are variable from this versatile Athens-based group, much of it sounding like '80s-influenced rock. By that I don't mean The Cult—more like The J. Geils Band. They are good at what they do, but they don't live up to their name. (BA)
Imperial Fuzz, 3197 Moss Oak Drive, Atlanta, GA 30340, www.imperialfuzz.com

Ceramic Hobs - Shergar Is Home Safe And Safe And Well, CD

One of those kooky, artsy bands that you have to be in the right mood to listen to. Not a lot of melody or harmony, just chaotic lyrics and guitar riffs. Messed up stuff, but interesting. (BC)
Pump Records, 25 Ivy Ave., Blackpool FY4 30F, UK, www.pumf.net

Charcoal - Flowers In The Cement, CD

A respectable update on The Sisters Of Mercy's first record and Bauhaus' more laid back material. The band excels musically, with interesting guitar work and ominous bass lines. This comes off as the kind of record you pick up, listen to once, forget about, but pick up again later. (RL)
Digital Kollapse Engineering / self-released, www.charcoalspirits.com

Charge - Universal Tribe, CDEP

Groove-core along the lines of RATM, Burn and Quicksilver-era Bad Brains. The first song begins with some tribal drumming before laying their Jah-influenced hardcore down. Most of the songs are heavy on groove with some wah guitar, thick drums and barked vocals. Yet it always sounds more hardcore than funky. Impressive. (NS)
Hell Bent, PO Box 1529, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742, www.hellbentrecords.com

Cheeseburger - S/T, CD

Four tracks of Monsters of Rock Tour stuff. This is a total rip-off '70s metal. Considering it's such a short disc with the worst cover ever, this isn't on the top of my buy list. The cover has a naked butt with a cheeseburger shoved up its crack. (EA)

Aerodrome, 302 Bedford Ave., PMB #133, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.aerodromerecords.com

Chicago Underground Trio - Slon, CD

This experimental trio is pushing the boundaries of jazz toward the margins in more ways than one. The album contains elements of electronica and noise. In fact, each of them has played with indie bands: Chad Taylor drummed for Sam Prekop; Noel Kupersmith played with country-tinged outfits Calexico and Sin Ropas; and Rob Mazurek's cornet has appeared on Stereolab and Tortoise albums. With Slon, they also make a political statement. The songs for the album originated while the initial invasion of Iraq was under way; the album is dedicated to those who have died "at the hands of U.S. imperialism." The first song, "Protest," is a key piece honed with shock and awe: erratic cornet and pinpointed drums, all above a sub-field of dark, hypnotic bass played with a bow. Next, the title song is dominated by a fury of random electronic blips, though the piece coalesces into some vibrant patterns. "Zagreb," another highlight, begins with two minutes of static, a subtle cacophony that eventually is the genesis for a sad and slow soundtrack to a gray time. The album, overall, demonstrates that a political statement can be conveyed in other ways than words. (BA)
Thrill Jockey Records, PO Box 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Abbie Amadio (AJA)

The Jesus And Mary Chain, Psychocandy. Sometimes within the time span of hearing only a few notes, you hear something wonderful. You hear all those things that move you and that command you to keep listening again and again. Every song sounds the way it should and not necessarily because someone has written it that way (of course they have), but because it is *supposed* to sound as it does. *Psychocandy* is one of those records where everything is in its place. The brothers Reid's melodies, filtered through static and guitar noise, along with their slow moan (Jim Reid, mostly) and a skeletal drumbeat, bring about such beautifully sinister songs. From the perfection of "Just Like Honey" to the creepy screams closing "Never Understand" to the catchy self-deprecation of "In A Hole," every melody is simplistic but complicated by distortion. The title, *Psychocandy*, sums up the feel of the record from start to finish: The songs pour out a sugary poison that's may or may not be dangerous, but thankfully for us it is.

CDs I listened to in my car: The Pixies, *Live In Minneapolis*; Q And Not U, *No Kill No Beep Beep*; Jawbreaker, *24 Hour Revenge Therapy*; Sleater-Kinney, *One Beat*; Dischord Boxset, Disc 1.

Chomsky - Let's Get To Second, CD

The nerds have their say, and it's "Rock!" These pop-punk tunes are super-crisp, super-produced and super-catchy in that emo vein that may be a major release in an indie's clothing. Regardless, it's infectious as all hell. It's somewhat unoriginal, so they'll either be huge or nobodies. (DM)
Aezra Records, 14040 N. Cave Creek Road, Suite 110 Phoenix, AZ 85022, www.aezra.com

Clair De Lune - Marionettes, CD

Besides the prevalent piano accompaniments, this CD does provide a decent mix of post-hardcore and soft '80s rock, which I've dubbed "Christopher Cross-over." The music is a little dreamy, and the singer has a pleasant voice. They're actually pretty unique, and if you know Deep Elm, you know to expect quality. (NS)
Deep Elm, PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deepelm.com

Clann Zú - Black Coats & Bandages, CD

Atmosphere and melody are Clann Zú's stock in trade. Sounding like a scaled-down Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds, they build haunting ballads and rock anthems from sparse instrumentation with nods to folk and rock. Two songs are sung in Irish. (RR)
G7 Welcoming Committee Records, PO Box 27006, C-360 Main St., Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4T3, Canada, www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Classic Case - It's Been Business Doing Pleasure With You, CDEP

Radio-Friendly rock with cheesy vocals. At times it reminds me of the lighter side of Mike Patton, but this EP is nothing but mediocre: over-done, run-of-the-mill alterna-rock. I'm sure it will be on the radio soon enough. (EH)
Self-released, www.classiccase.net

Climb The Mind - Denaturalization, CD

Japanese indie rock with lots of variety. There are quick moments, like a less funky Minutemen, brighter moments à la Snuffy Smile bands and more solemn moments in a Deep Elm vein. Everything is sung in Japanese, but the singer has a good voice, ranging from poppy to soft to unrestrained. Nice work. (NS)
Blue Blue Blue, 102-1-53, Hioka-cho, Chikusa-ku, Nagoya-shi, 464-0834, Japan

Clorox Girls - S/T, CD

The Clorox Girls fuckin' rocked me off my ass this month. It takes a lot to excite me, but the opening track, "The One," is a great anthem from the first listen. Then we tear right into "Walks The Streets." With 12 tracks that are short and sweet, the Clorox Girls do not waste your time. Their onesheet says think Red Cross, Urinals and maybe the Gears; I was also gonna add the Rip Offs, Briefs and any of the other new NW power-pop bands. In fact, I would go as far as saying that 10 of the tracks on this disc make a perfect album. The Clorox Girls are taking the ex-garage scene by storm, and this power trio has the hooks, the smarts and the catchy lyrics that demand your attention. (EA)
Smartguy Records, 3288 21st St., PMB #32, San Francisco, CA 94110, www.smartguyrecords.com

Coffinshakers, The - We Are The Undead, CD

Taken on its own, this is pretty cool, pumped up, '50s-style rockabilly. It's just wholly unoriginal. The vocalist sings about graveyards and zombies in a deep baritone voice, à la Johnny Cash. Actually, all the songs sound like "Ghost Riders In The Sky." Somewhat interesting. (AJ)
Primitive Art Records, PO Box 143, SE-301 04 Halmstad, Sweden, www.primitiverecords.com

Cohen, Danny - Dannyland, CD

Dannyland has a familiar sound and was recorded by an older artist gentleman, kind of like Captain Beefheart or Tom Waits. The songs are a little

silly and have some drug themes, but the music is well-orchestrated and well-arranged. Not my cup of tea, but good to the last drop. (DI)

Anti-, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles CA 90026, www.anti.com

Complicated Shirt - Strigine, CD

This is a complicated shirt. The songs constantly change from sweetly melodic to brutal and go off on tangents to their conclusion. Sometimes the singer sounds constipated and other times like an early Elvis Costello. The lo-fi recording of this unusually schizophrenic record is barely holding it together. I liked it. (JJG)
Self-released, www.complicatedshirt.com

Conelrad - Bezoar, 7"

Two-piece bands are trendy these days, but this insane two-man outfit from Pittsburgh is anything but trendy. Fusing prog rock and metal influences into their brand of fast, contemporary hardcore, they produce an end result that is brutally original. Both of the band members sing, while one drums and the other plays guitar. One of the four tracks is a killer cover of The Minutemen's classic "Paranoid Chant," with entertainingly modified words to reflect our fucked-up times. IQ tests are bullshit, but if they weren't, the band's lyrics, particularly on the song "Power For Fucking," would garner a Mensa-eligible IQ. *Bezoar* is exemplary thinker's hardcore for the new millennium. Fast as hell, creative and intellectual without being pretentious, Conelrad has it all. (AE)
Hope Records, PO Box 71154, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, www.hoperecords.com

Cool Concern, The - Weapon, CD

These three brothers went out one night and captured heavy metal in a transparent old pickle jar, then fed it chemicals to slow it down and made it wear a homemade thinking cap knitted from old Dischord records. They wield feedback like a flamethrower, burst out with clear, powerful basslines, and build drama with unexpected changes. (DAL)
Salty Records, www.saltrecords.com

Cougars - Manhandler, CDEP

Lots of bands go for the "big" rock sound, but few have the manpower to achieve it. This eight-piece blasts out the rock with horns without plummeting into ska territory. Rocket From The Crypt comparisons are inevitable; mixing a little Jesus Lizard wiggle into the rock assault, Cougars are more than mere RFC imitators. (RR)
Thick Records, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622, www.thickrecords.com

Crusade - The Beauty Within The Decay, CDEP

I wrote off this album as soon as I saw it—too much black-and-red, Old English-font, dead-tree action on the cover to be immediately taken seriously. After a listen, I discovered the stuff is a little catchy. Pop-punk with a dark side and, as their name suggests, some ambiguous religious overtones. (LW)
Trace Records, PO Box 35186, Syracuse, NY 13235, www.tracerecords.com

Cut Copy - Future, 12"

Four different versions of one dancey house song. One original version and three remixes by Chromeo, !!! and Zongamin, the last being the best with its primitive rap/disco funk vibe. I'm not too fond of the singer's voice, but it's a danceable song. Isn't that all that matters? (NS)
Giant Step Records, 62 White St., Ste. 3R, New York, NY 10013, www.giantstep.com

Damage Control - What It Takes, CD

It looks like it's a good issue for straight-edge hardcore. *What It Takes* is Damage Control's first full-length. At times they sound like a more melod-



ic Carry On, but there's a bit of Better Than A Thousand too. A crucial addition to the modern hardcore scene. (DA)

Live Wire Records, PO Box 007 Mendham, NJ 07945, www.livewire-records.com

Danielson – Brother Is To Son, CD

This record finds Daniel Smith of the Danielson Famile guiding his folk soldiers into the revelry of a supped-up, street-side hoedown. Danielson's high-pitched, irresistible, off-kilter vocal melodies and punk-rock acoustic guitar lead this jamboree, accompanied by banjo and harmonies worthy of applause from the finest of jug-band aficionados. (CC)

Secretly Canadian, 1021 S. Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.secretlycanadian.com

Deadly Weapons – Get Right In There, CD

Tina Lucchesi from Trashwomen/Bobbyteens/Tina And The Total Babes is fronting the Deadly Weapons. Think if her old Bobbyteens played AC/DC songs and used Greg Ginn as their guitarist. Justin of the Clorox Girls plays drums on this one and keeps the rhythm going. This is good '80s-hardcore-sounding punk rock before too much machismo took over. The chorus of every song reminds me of why I love the Bobbyteens records, in that you can sing along with the chorus by the second repeat. Some may dismiss this as cookie-cutter punk rock—verse, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, etc.—but *Get Right In There* is a party record that the boys and girls can love. In fact, ending this record with a cover of "What A Way To Die" is brilliant, a perfect ending to a fun half hour or less. (EA)

Jonny Cat Records, PO Box 82428, Portland, OR 97282

Death Angel – The Art Of Dying, CD

Reunions are just sad to me. Death Angel were a seminal Bay Area thrash band when Metallica ruled the scene, so the idea of putting out a throw-back thrash album in 2004 when metal bands are so much more creative falls flat. Coming soon to a dive bar near you. (DH)

Nuclear Blast Records, 2323 West El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250, www.nuclearblastusa.com

Death From Above – Romantic Rights, CDEP

Hard-hitting, shake-yr-ass dancey punk rock that manages to be rhythmic and fully hip while sticking to strict punk roots. It's like Hot Hot Heat or The Rapture gone heavy metal. The latter part of the album takes a country turn that includes both choir-belted highs and trippy, soft lows. (DAL)

Sound Virus, PO Box 55783, Valencia, CA 91385, www.sound-virus.com

Decibully – City Of Festivals, CD

Earnest pop songs that range from sparse, wispy numbers with a hint of *Wood/Water*-era Promise Ring or Death Cab For Cutie (both bands whose members have played with members of this band), to synth-heavy jams with soulful, androgynous vocals. The latter part of the album takes a country turn that includes both choir-belted highs and trippy, soft lows. (DAL)

Polyvinyl Records, PO Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826, www.polyvinylrecords.com

Demolition Doll Rods – On, CD

They may get overshadowed by fellow Detroitians The White Stripes, but for my money, the Doll Rods do the bluesy, guitar-and-drums garage rock thing way better. This is sweaty, sexy, dirty rock that doesn't forget that it's all about getting down and having a good time. Hell yeah. (JC)

Swami Records, PO Box 620428, San Diego, CA 92162, www.swamirecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Bill Angelbeck (BA)

Gang of Four, Solid Gold. Politics and music melded together well in the Gang of Four from Leeds, England. Their works from the early days of post-punk were jarring and intense, and politics imbued nearly all of their verses, even their name. Released in 1981, *Solid Gold* was the follow-up to their heralded *Entertainment!*, though both are a pairing; these are the only albums composed of the original line-up, and their sound changed considerably afterwards. I'll admit I actually had first heard their later, more new wave, material (the spacey "I Love A Man In A Uniform") and found *Solid Gold* as I hunted for more of their music. This stuff was far better. The sound was stark and minimalist, the guitars were cutting, bass punctuating, and the drumming forceful. In tandem, the lyrics were cerebral and polemic, attacking the core tenets of Western civilization on various fronts. They aimed in Marxist fashion to upend capitalist ideologies. With the irony-laden "Cheeseburger," they challenged the myth of an egalitarian America; "No classes in the U.S. of A." Perhaps sometimes they could be overly theoretical, as with "Paralyzed": "History's the reason I'm washed out." In 1995, the CD was released combined with the *Another Day/Another Dollar* EP, which includes live versions of two songs from *Solid Gold* that have an even rawer sound. It also contains the excellent "Capitalism (It Fails Us Now)" and "To Hell With Poverty." The album more than holds up today, and their message is, of course, still relevant.

Currently under the needle (or laser): The Books, *The Lemon Of Pink*; Califone, *Heron King Blues*; The Walkmen, *Bows + Arrows*; Chicago Underground Trio, *Slon* (reviewed this issue); The Discord Of A Forgotten Sketch, *S/T* (reviewed this issue).

Desert City Soundtrack / Settlefish / Sounds Like Violence – split, CD

Here's what you get: one SLV song, three by Settlefish and two by DCS, none of them spectacular. The bands play different strains of noisy post-punk/emo, all capably, but nothing noteworthy. The last two tracks are subdued affairs, ending the CD in the forgettable way in which it began. (KR)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte NC 28236, www.deepeelm.com

Desoto Reds – Hanglide Thru Yer Window, CD

It can be startling when a band so blindingly talented rips open your ears in new ways. It can be scary (how is it possible to hear things this new way?), angering (someone is now making music better than my ex-favorite—how dare they replace my throbs?) and invigorating (it's about time I heard something that mixed the highly refined lexicon of The Decemberists with the daydreaming whimsy of Of Montreal). It's all uplifting to get a new favorite to slip into the rotation. California's Desoto Reds mix such a swath of influences together that each song is a different conglomerate of greatest hits taking a new form. *Hanglide Thru Yer Window* puts listeners back on a short-stacking musical bicycle with wobbly training wheels and forces them to learn how to ride again, regaining the feeling of what it's like when balance is conquered and the wheels are removed for the first solo ride. (SM)

Floating Man Records / self-released, www.desotoreds.com

Despistado – The Emergency Response, CD EP

Loosely knit, dance-influenced post-punk with rapid-fire, monotonous vocals. There are a lot of mountains and valleys here; the tracks that avoid the predictable sassy-scream-over-lo-fi drums-n'-choppy-guitars formula are more appealing. Given a little more time, these gentlemen are likely to step into their own, tighten up and create something above average. (BM)

Jade Tree Records, 2310 Kenwyn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetre.com

Dielectric Minimalist All-Stars – [1], 2xCD

In an effort to better understand how or what a Dielectric Minimalist All-Star was, I decided the investigate what exactly the word "dielectric" meant. Dictionary.com defines it as "A nonconductor of electricity, especially a substance with electrical conductivity of less than a millionth (10⁻⁶) of a siemens." Yes, of course now I understand. If deciphering what exactly that word even means is confusing, I challenge you to actually listen to this album. This two-disc album, which spans over two-plus hours, was recorded impromptu by various performers given only the themes of minimalism and an old alarm clock to guide them. No, you read that correctly and yes, [1] sounds as overblown and pretentious as you would think. (Look at the title for Pete's sake!) Just like their contemporaries in Pan Sonic, I can appreciate the artistic freedom that comes with such noise-making, but who ever feels like listening to such an awful racket? (MS)

Dielectric Records, 472 1/2 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland CA 94609, www.dielectricrecords.com

Dirtshakes – Return To Boomsfeeldelah, CD

The Dirtshakes' newest is a collection of tracks from vinyl releases and compilations. There are several covers, such as Radio Birdman and Angry Samoans. I dug their pop take on punk rock, without too much sugar. Some unreleased tracks and a lot of cool videos makes this a great buy. (EA)

Valve Records, Putzfeld 10, 42655 Solingen, Germany, www.valve-records.com

Danielson / Duck Duck Gray Duck

Discord Of A Forgotten Sketch, The – S/T, CDEP

Noise, screams, manic speeds, schizophrenic transformations—a chaotic onslaught. This is a beautiful garden of cacophony. Here is noise-core from Montreal with mathematic timing and change-ups that rivals the intensity of The Ruins. The songs are absolutely unpredictable and experimental, shifting from a full-bore clamor to technical guitar playing to chant-driven punchiness in a matter of seconds. The vocals constantly are screamed, sounding their barbaric yawps over the roofs of the world—and the leads even are accompanied by backing shrieks. Even when they slow down, as in "Agony 6.66," the mood's as welcome as the morning's first coffee buzz, with hypnotic guitar picking beneath light hovers of sounds from unknown origins. I clap. (BA)

New Romance For Kids Records, 1614 St-Christophe, Montreal, QC H2L 3W8, Canada, www.newromanceforkids.qb.net

Dissonant – Suffocating In A Dead Scene, CD

Metal-infused hardcore with plenty of Slayer-type guitar assaults and double-bass kicks. They try to mix in some stoner rock, orchestral strings and acoustic guitar for variation, but it still results in average hardcore. On the whole, it's OK, but they should have avoided singing. (EH)

All or Nothing Records, 5160 Brookstone Dr., Rockford MI, 49341, www.allornothingrecords.com

Don Juan Destroyer – S/T, CDEP

One of my favorite East Coast melodic punk bands return as a three-piece with a five-song EP. The punchy but sweet female vocals carry nicely over some clean melodic guitar work. The songs are different from one another and have a few twists and turns to keep things interesting. (BC)

Self-released, www.donjuandestroyer.com

Dragueurs, Les – Bob / Le Menestrel Twist – split, 7"

Awesome. The Les Dragueurs play a ridiculously good garage pop/mod-rock blend. I took Spanish in high school, so I have no clue as to what this French band is singing about (although their bio insures me its wholesome numbers about "chicks, motorbikes and having fun"). The group conjures up images of a happy, pre-Slash records Claude Debussy fronting a Quadrophonia house band. (Jimmy Cooper, Monkey, Ace and myself are, of course, big fans.) A must for those who like mod-dancehall pop or anyone else with a penchant for fun foreign records. (RL)

Born Bad / self-released, www.jonvon.com/les-dragueurs

Driftless Pony Club – Janel, CD

Overall, this is an enjoyable power-pop debut LP out of the Midwest. The songs are well-crafted and catchy. Musically, they can hold their own against obvious influence Modest Mouse. There's a quirky quality to the band that makes you pay attention. Here's hoping the next album is even better. (MP)

Self-released, www.driftlessponyclub.com

Duck Duck Gray Duck – Desire, 12"

Composed and arranged by Alex Yusimov and performed and recorded with The Locust, The Dolly Ranchers and Mirah, *Desire* is a collection of post-punk parlor music for rockers who prefer onions to olives and moonshine to martinis. A few tales from modern-day gypsy folklore. (CC)

Mississippi Records, c/o DDGD, 4007 N. Mississippi, Portland, OR 97227

Dutchmen, The – Bloodthirsty, CD

The opening guitar riffs are powerful like an AC/DC record. These rockers come from the outskirts of the musically superior land called Chicago and have the balls to rock better than most bands today. Damn, this is rock 'n' roll! (BC)
Threat Records, PO Box 583, Elgin, IL 60120, www.thedutchmen.com

Dying Californian, The – We Are The Birds That Stay, CD

Formerly Nuzzle, these guys changed their name to suit their new alt-country sound. The guitars are jangly and twangy, the vocals are sung with a slight strain, and the songs are melancholic and forlorn. This CD is very pleasant and subtle, so support these guys instead of that douchebag Ryan Adams. (NS)

Turn Records, PO Box 784, Santa Clara, CA 95052, www.turnrecords.com

Dynamite Boy – S/T, CD

Twelve modern-radio-friendly tunes from a band that is on the Warped Tour. Great production, of course. It's not bad at all, but might get lost in the shuffle with so many bands doing the radio-friendly "pop-punk" things these days. (BC)

Fearless Records, 13772 Goldenwest St., #545, Westminster, CA 92683, www.fearlessrecords.com

Eberly, John – Imagination, CD

John Eberly is former headman of The Mumbles, a garage troubadour with touches of blues and hard-rock, channeling a lot of sounds from the '70s. Although it's not breaking any new ground, there's some life in it. (BA)
TOPhone Records, PO Box 49480 Wichita, KS 67201, www.listen.to/tophone

Ed Random Band, The – Boxer, CD

This is great, straight-up punk 'n' roll. Street rock with the stand-up bass, it does have some rockabilly leanings, but generally has more of a fresh, thick and gritty sound with a ton of sing-alongs. Besides fine beers and overpriced cars, this may be one of Germany's best exports. (DM)

Wolverine Records, Kaiserwerther Str. 166, 40474 Düsseldorf, Germany, www.wolverine-records.de

86 List, The – Tattoo, CD

Another DIY punk-rock release that starts off pretty typically, but halfway through they jazz it up with a couple of ska-influenced tunes that are actually pretty good. Aside from those two or three mildly interesting tunes, this was your run-of-the-mill punk record. (KM)

The 86 List, 59-092 Kam Hwy, Haleiwa, HI 96712, www.the96list.com

Electric, The – Degenerotic Doses, CD

Competent but run-of-the-mill garage/hard rock that's getting really played out these days. There's such a surplus of bands like this that you really gotta kick ass to shine through. The Electric don't. Pull the plug. (JC)
Pro-Vel Records, PO Box 5182, St. Louis, MO 63139, www.provelrecords.com

Electric Frankenstein – We Will Bury You, 2xCD

This giant 31-song release collects all of E.F.'s covers from their first 10 years as a band. They were known for their distinct, garagey sound, and it's interesting to hear them cover songs from a diverse sampling of bands, including Crime, Circle Jerks, Blue Oyster Cult, Pink Floyd and Joan Jett. (AE)
TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St., #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

Eluvium – An Accidental Memory In The Case Of Death, CD

Mathew Cooper (Eluvium) delivers an epic record of instrumental neo-classic piano work. In of themselves the songs showcase Cooper's downheart-

ed genius, the fact that all the material was recorded live, with no overdubs, over the course of two hours, just makes the jaw drop even lower. (BM)
Temporary Residence, PO Box 11390, Portland, OR 97211, www.temporaryresidence.com

Empress – The Sounds They Made, CD

Empress feels like your mama gently rocking you to sleep. It's comforting and lulling. One delicate melody, either on the guitar or piano, repeats throughout a song with sparse, quiet vocals hovering about. It's perfect for late-afternoon naps and just generally kicking back. (AA)

Pehr, 6546 Hollywood Blvd Ste 201, Los Angeles, CA 90028, www.pehrlabel.com

Encrypt Manuscript – Dialogues, CDEP

Encrypt Manuscript plays stripped down, simplistic rock with no distorted guitars and dueling sassy vocals. The drums and the guitars can be disconnected at times, but they all end up on the same path. This album is completely innovative and defies genre classification. I can't wait for a full-length. (EH)

Self-released, 84 Valentine Ave., Glen Cove, NY 11542, www.encryptmanuscript.com

End – The Sound Of Disaster, CD

Real avant-garde acid-house/drum'n'bass. Performance art? Don't know. It's all pops and buzzes to me—literally. Although they do sample Lemmy—"That's the way I like it baby/I don't wanna live forever!"—on one track. (AJ)
Ipecac Recordings, PO Box 1197, Alameda, CA 94501, www.ipecac.com

Endeavors, The – The End Of The Endeavors, CD

No information on the band or even track titles came with this, so I can't tell you much. I *cantell* you this Japanese band may appeal to Registrators fans. Low-budget recording and a dirty sound make this a sweet slice of pie. (EA)
Blue Blue Blue, 102-1-53, Hioka-cyo, Chikusa-ku, Nagoya-shi, 464-0834, Japan

Envy Corps, The – Soviet Reunion, CD

Very reminiscent of Radiohead and, at times, a less boring Coldplay, The Envy Corps melds together electronic beats with a wide span of instruments, ranging from a flugelhorn, harpsichord, contrabassoon and the standard guitar, bass and drums. The record starts off strong with "You'd Look Good In Wings, Part III" and "...Part II," but slowly starts to drag until picking up again at disc's end. With its nervously repetitive organ notes, "Martyrs (Blood Blood)" is the strongest track. The likewise noteworthy "Keys To Good Living" ends the album on a more aggressive note. All in all, there are more than a few songs worth listening to and remembering. (AJA)

Bi-Fi Records, PO Box 1327, Ames, IA 50014, www.bifirecords.com

Epidemic, The – S/T, CD

Well, after listening to so much radio-friendly stuff, it's refreshing to hear some East Coast hardcore punk rock. Eleven fast and angry songs that say "Fuck you!" Just what I needed. (BC)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Eskapo – Kalayaan, CD

Eskapo are a solid hardcore outfit that, intriguingly, sings mostly in Tagalog (the native tongue of the Philippines) and English. Many of the songs, like "Mamamatay Ang Mundo," concern politics and history of the Philippines, such as the Bataan Death March. Others address the immigrant experience in the states ("no one race owns a nation"). (BA)

Eskapo, 127 Missouri St, Vallejo, CA 94590, www.eskapo.com

Et At It – I Count, CD

Well this group of two guitarists and bassist share the company of a few fellow musicians in DC, NYC and maybe Chicago. I think about Robert Frith sitting in a semicircle with a dozen guitarists all playing a round of "Row, Row, Row, Your Boat." On *I Count*, you won't hear a dozen guitarists, but you will hear some prog rock and notes and tones that will make you wonder where they came from—the tunings aren't from Western music. These well-constructed three-minute songs won't bore you. A lot of times similar musicians make the mistake of using a sonic assault in 30 seconds or take the opposite approach of putting you to sleep with a 30-minute epic journey. No, three minutes without any drums is enough to put you in a deep trance. The only percussion here is the tapping of the pickups and some hicups. Don't worry, you'll be out in a minute. I really like this and will look for future recordings. (DI)

Northern Liberties, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington, DC 20007, www.dischord.com

Eternals, The – Rawar Style, CD

Sub-par electronic hip/hop. I am having a really hard time pinning this one down because it has several sounds, none of them done particularly well. Try their website and see what you think. (EA)

Aesthetics, PO Box 82333, Portland, OR 97282, www.aesthetics-usa.com

Every Forty Seconds / The Callup – Time Heals Nothing, split CD

Well I'll be damned, two more emotional hardcore bands to add to the heap. But wait! These two are actually good. Every Forty Seconds provide four charged tracks, including the brilliant "Lungs Vs. Liver," while The Callup close things out with their own brand of "heart on the sleeve" screamo. (BN)

Lost Glory Records, PO Box 15308, Portland, ME 04102, www.lostglory.com

eX-Girl – Endangered Species, CD

Only three women from the Planet KeroKero (Tokyo) could make a record that creates infectious pop rock via graceful segues from speed-metal guitar riffs into the sonic, meandering strings of synthesized prog symphonies. More proof positive that the Japanese are the forefront of noise rock. (CC)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

Face Tomorrow – The Closer You Get, CD

Another band combines prog-based post-hardcore and sensitive power-pop 10 years too late. Music aside, I'm thrilled to finally see photographs of telephone wires and abandoned buildings being used as visual liner note concepts. The only thing worth crying and screaming about on this record is the lack of creativity. (BM)

Reflections Records, www.reflectionsrecords.com

Fancey – S/T, CD

Poppy and melodic with swinging, happy beats, this self-titled release is the solo project of Todd Fancey of the New Pornographers. Appropriate for wispy-haired dudes into polyester and Converse, and their vintage dress-wearing girlfriends. (JG)

March Records, 562 Seventh St., #14, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.marchrecords.com

Fang – Live Cheap CD, CD

This compilation of live sets throughout the Fang's career suffers from some bad, bootleg-sounding recordings. From what I can tell, the music is no-frills '80s punk rock that doesn't really rock at all. (KM)

Malt Soda Recordings, PO Box 7611, Chandler, AZ 85246, www.maltsoda.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Jay Castaldi (JC)

The Mushuganas, Dropout Girl EP: The Mushuganas were the first great new band I discovered when I moved from Indiana to Chicago in 1994. I'd see them at the Fireside Bowl opening for bands like Chaos UK and the Subhumans, playing melodic, dirty pop punk to crowds of scary goons that only seem to crawl out of the woodwork to see bands like Chaos UK and the Subhumans. The Mushuganas were young upstarts back then, all in their late teens, and the amount of attitude they showed as they mocked and ridiculed these potentially riotous thugs from the stage never ceased to amuse and impress me. Even more impressive was their knowledge of classic punk, pop and rock 'n' roll, which was evident in the quality of their songwriting. They struck gold with their third release, the *Dropout Girl* EP, whose four superb songs captured the band's energy and teen angst in both the music and lyrics. Poetic and romantic in the same way that Crimphrine was, while adding a fourth chord and tasteful little solos to the simple Ramones formula, The Mushuganas forged a unique sound out of some common influences. *Dropout Girl* is one of the finest records ever to be released by a Chicago punk band.

My current crushes: The Marked Men, *On The Outside* LP; The Sultans *Shipwrecked*, CD; The Figgs, *Palais* 2xCD; The Briefs, *Sex Objects* LP; Giant Haystacks, *We Are Being Observed* CD (reviewed this issue).



Farewell My Enemy – Casting For Funerals, CD

If you've heard one mediocre emo/hardcore band (and you have), you've heard them all. This debut is tight musically, but lyrically and vocally predictable. But don't worry, they'll get their spot on the Warped Tour next year. (MP)

Rise Records, PO Box 135, Roseburg, OR 97470, www.riserecords.com

Favez – Bellefontaine Avenue, CD

A Doghouse Records staple who sounds as if they've been making the same album since they've started (this being their fifth). It's the same old story: polished rock with big choruses that sounds like it could be the playlist at your local modern-rock station, but without the necessary melodies. Snooze rock at its most banal. (MS)

Doghouse Records, PO Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623, www.doghouserecords.com

Fear My Thoughts – The Great Collapse, CD

I was pretty torn on this one. The slower tracks that border on typical "metal-core" are not very impressive, but my favorite songs/parts of songs sound a lot like Scandinavian melodic metal (At The Gates). I just wish they were more "speedy metal" and less whiney. (TK)

Lifeforce Records, www.lifeforcerecords.com

Feeling Left Out – Once Upon a Time, CD

A good album from a duo out of New Jersey that are heavy on their acoustic guitars and mostly without percussion. The songs are mostly fast-paced with urgent vocals, and each song is framed by noises and sounds: car horns, bell chimes, bits of conversations, etc. For some songs, these parts add complexity; for others, they're unnecessary attachments that have no integral role to the album, like unwarranted afterthoughts. The lyrics can be good, as in "take a crowbar to your mouth/ to make what's on the inside come out." Some of the words can lean toward sappiness, though, and the intensity of the singing doesn't change much throughout. Still, the songs themselves are quite nice and done with a production that plays favorably through the headphones. (BA)

LLR Recordings, Inc., 1566 Algonquin Road, Hoffman Estates, IL 60195, www.llrrecords.com

Fiction, The / Birthday Boyz – split, 7"

Very similar-sounding hardcore bands. The Fiction brings two songs to the mix, with clean instrumentation building to a structured dissonance. The Birthday Boyz's contribution, "Basketball," is a strange, ferocious ode to Michael Jordan with a sort of repetitive quality. If you like this genre, these bands are worth checking out. (LW)

McCarthyism, www.mccarthyism.org

Fifth Hour Hero / The Sainte Catherine's – split, 7"

Two of Canada's finest get together to spread forth the social and political messages that they're known for. FHH play with a little more restraint and melody, while TSC break out the passionate anger and just cut loose. Nice packaging rounds out this fine split. (BN)

1-2-3-4 Go! Records, c/o S. Stevenson, 732 56th St., Oakland, CA 94609, www.1234gorecords.com

54-71 – All Songs Composed & Performed By 54-71 In February 2004, CD

Good ol' Japan. 54-71's odd, Tortoise-meets-Portishead-meets-indie-rock style is funky and laid back at all of the right times. A completely interesting release that's as original as it gets. Seek this out if any of the aforementioned bands even somewhat interest you. (DH)

Some Of Us Records, 6F-A Wakou, Bld 1-12-16, Jinna Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 150-0041, Japan, www.some-of-us.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

Dart 36010". Before North Carolina's punk scene fell into a cesspool of contrived metalcore, the early '90s held a small, but burgeoning niche of chaotic punk. Those who were there will remember such bands like Rights Reserved, resol and Cornelius playing house shows at Dick St. The Dart 360 Band was a Raleigh foursome that rose out of the ashes of resol and disappeared almost as quickly as they formed. Imagine a pulsating foundation based on the then current climate of Angel Hair, Antioch Arrow or Heroin, but add more structured songwriting and an artsy sensibility (referencing French foreign films and The Velvet Underground). Meandering instrumentals added dimension to the band's madness, rounding out an all-too-short release. The band broke up long before the 10" came out. When it finally did, the posthumous release (on Assorted Porkchops) seemed like a last sigh before the scene disappeared, leaving the tobacco state high and dry for years to come.

GET YOUR DICK WET: Vee Dee, S/T LP; Black Eyes, *Cough*; Signal Lost, demo; Dragzilla, demo; Fucked Up, *Epics In Minutes* CD.

Final Baton – Cul Sec, CDEP

One of the best sounding CDs I've received this issue is in French, and I have no idea what they're talking about. However, this EP rocks the fuck out while combining elements of post hXc, touches of progressive and aggro punk and metal in some spots. Lots of start-and-stop bits, the shouting, the attitude. Elements of Helmet or Snapcase definitely come to mind, but there's something more here. Let's just put it this way: This is the new hotness, imported style. (DM)

Self-released, final_baton@hotmail.com

First Class – Somewhere In The Grey, CD

The latest melodic punk band on Chicago's Johann's Face Records comes out with a decent debut. Like a cleaner version of 88 Fingers Louie (remember them?), First Class is fun-filled, fast punk. (BC)

Johann's Face Records PO Box 479164 Chicago, IL 60647, www.johannsfacerecords.com

Fitt, The – Blow Me Away, CD

The dictionary definition of good local band should read, "Nice clean recording, tight, with lyrics are fun to sing." The Fitts remind me of every decent opening punk-rock act. They obviously have their shit together, but are lacking that extra something that would make them more than a Pittsburgh band. (EA)

Self-released, www.thefitt.com

Fixer – All The Pleasure That You Crave, CDEP

This is heroin rock that rips off Iggy, Kiss and '70s metal. The onesheet brags that a Grammy winner recorded them, and the former manager of Billy Idol and Kiss thinks they're "the return of rock and roll." Five tracks and a music video that returns no rock into my roll. (EA)

Self-released, www.fixermusic.com

Five Knuckle – Balance, CD

This is the second LP by the English punk/hardcore band. Hard, fast guitar riffs fuel the anger of vocalist Dan Sanfey, who screams about everything from alcohol to voting to individualism. But this supposed sociopolitical album seems too contrived to inspire any real action. Sorry lads, don't expect a revolution. (MP)

Household Name Records, PO Box 12286, London SW9 6FE, UK, www.householdnamerecords.co.uk

Fiya – Make Joy, Make Strength, 12"

I don't know what it is about Florida that makes it such a prolific breeding ground for pissed off punk bands, but you can add Fiya to the already impressive list. Think a beefed up Against Me! sound with screamed vocals and heavy guitars backed up by the punishing drums. (BN)

Obscurist Press, PO Box 13077, Gainesville, FL 32604, obscurist@hotmail.com

Flowers In The Attic – S/T, CDEP

Now this is what screamo should sound like. I can't help but be reminded of Born Against, Heroin and Swing Kids. "Blah Blah Blah Shit" concludes the six-song EP perfectly. Highly recommended if you like the aforementioned bands. (DA)

Reptilian Records, 403 S. Broadway, Baltimore, MD 21231, www.reptilianrecords.com

Fojimoto – Don't Let Your Baby Down, CD

Cute but unremarkable indie-rock out of San Francisco. They've got some nice melodies, but it's difficult to differentiate these tracks from anything else on modern rock radio right now. Great for fans of Wilco, the Jayhawks and other inoffensive rock outfits. (JC)

Self-released, 1146 Florida St., San Francisco, CA 94110, www.fojimoto.com

Farewell My Enemy / Frankenixon

Folly – Insanity Later, CD

Combining a metal edge style with elements of ska, Folly is the most impressive hXc band I have ever heard. Imagine if Converge and Black Cross/By The Grace Of God wanted to form a super-group. You'd combine the metal with the punchier rock licks of a different style of hXc, then occasionally add some ska back beats to the equation. Sounds weird, I know, or some would even say unappealing. I would normally be one of those naysayers. This actually works out really well, and I'm not referring to a kind of Bosstone or Mephiskaphelese type of sound. I'm talking full-on hXc with great breakdowns as well as some ska bits. Even though I think it's a novelty sound that will be kitschy in the long run, these guys are doing it well and will get recognized for it. (DM)

Triple Crown Records, 331 W. 57th St., #472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

...For All I Care – Nyssa, CDEP

If Buffy were still slaying vampires in Sunnydale, this band would no doubt be playing a Friday night at the Bronze. ...For All I Care plays girl-fronted alternative rock with conventional lyrics about breaking-up and being lonely—entirely less exciting than vampire slaying. (AJA)

Self-released, www.forallicare.com

Forgotten Boys, The – Gimme More (And More), CD

This Brazilian band puts out some pretty good glam punk in the way of the New York Dolls and T.Rex. *Gimme More (And More)* is a slickly produced piece with catchy, campy songs and crunchy guitars. (LW)

No Fun Records, PO Box 8154, Ann Arbor, MI 48107, www.nofunrecords.com

Forty-Fives, The – High Life High Volume, CD

Energetic, straight-up rock: no politics, no emo confessions, just rock (with harmonica, guitar solos and organ). These guys kick a lot of ass live, but this CD feels repetitious. If the Forty-Fives avoided some rock 'n' roll clichés (i.e., the requisite slow song, "Too Many Miles"), they'd be awesome. (KR)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

46 Short – Just A Liability, CD

Formed from former members of Final Conflict, 46 Short play old-school hardcore like it's the first time around. Smart lyrics that don't try to sound smarter than they are. I feel like I am in L.A. in '83, man. (TK)

Go Kart Records PO Box 20 Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012, www.gokartrecords.com

Foundation – Homecoming, 7"

Here are three acoustic songs from Rob of Ann Beretta. "Homecoming" has drums on it too. Side B is cooler because it's got Allison of Discount singing "No Smoke." The third song, "Wave Of Destruction," is just Rob singing, and it sounds like the second verse of the "No Smoke". (DI)

1-2-3-4 Go! Records, 420 Wall St #206, Seattle, WA 98121, www.1234gorecords.com

Fractal Pattern – No Hope But Mt. Hope, CD

I don't like Canadian bands except DOA, but this Edmonton-band has won me over. The sound is a little derivative of the Dirty Three, but don't let that stop you from digging it. The guitar, drums, and bass are gently mixed with tender horns and string sections. (DI)

Method Records, www.methodrecords.com

Frankenixon – Amorphous, CD

Sparse piano and guitar with unsettling female vocals half sung, half spoken. Frankenixon somehow manage to waver between making me feel at

Free Moral Agents / Gigantor

ease and making me uncomfortable, but with pleasing results. Sometimes, weird is good. (DH)

Bi-Fi Records, PO Box 1327, Ames, IA 50014, www.bifirecords.com

🔗 **Free Moral Agents – Everybody's Favorite Weapon, CD**

From Isaiah "Ikey" Owens, the keyboardist of The Mars Volta, we get an interesting debut album. At its core this is a jazz album, but Owens builds up each song, lacing them with hip-hop beats, electronic distortions and varied instrumentation. Singer Mendee Ichikawa provides the subtle and seductive vocals, while rapper J is called upon for the rhymes. "Lay Down," "Gem From a Broken Rock" and "Disjointed Love Song" are stand-out tracks. A few songs drag (and half of "What's Your Bloodgauge" is silence), but largely this album is smooth and engaging, recalling what trip-hop should've become. (Tricky pay attention, please.) Perfect for that chill-out night. (MP)

Gold Standard Laboratories, PO Box 65091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.goldstandardlabs.com

Freezepop – Fancy Ultra-Fresh, CD

They claim it's "hip enough for hipsters but nerdy enough for nerds." I think it sounds like a cheap euro-techpop rip-off. Tons of synthesizers and programmers that kind of sound repetitive after the third of fourth track. Just get an Adult record instead. (JG)

Archenemy Record Company, PO Box 802, Allston, MA 02134, www.archenemy.com

🔗 **Fresh Kills – S/T, CDEP**

An outstanding EP from this new band out of New York. While Drive Like Jehu is an obvious influence, everything from Fugazi, Wire, The Murder City Devils and Dave Allen's bass playing can be found on this five-song EP. It's refreshing to hear a band with an idiosyncratic sound; just when you think you got the Fresh Kills' number, they change it up on you. The group delivers with rich song structures; when lead singer Zachary Lipetz isn't belting them out, the band doesn't abide by a typical pre-chorus or by the numbers bridge. Whether it be the their rhythm section playing in a dialect only they know or angular guitars killing you like a drunk with a circular saw, there isn't a slow spot on this record. Which leads me to this question: Why can't all records be this fulfilling? (RL)

Self-released, www.fresh-kills.com

Friends Of Lizzy – The Answer, CD

Friends Of Lizzy take a soft palette of pacifying pastel and apply it to everything within arm's length, creating a block of indie pop. Sweet and unthreatening, these Texans are probably nice guys who watch *Say Anything* regularly for pointers. (SM)

Self-released, www.friendsoflizzy.com

Frog Eyes – The Bloody Hand, CD

Frog Eyes play what comes off as a gothic carnival procession, tightly wrapped in sheets of LSD. Singer Carey Mercer wails and gargles his psychward tunes over the band's oddball fits. Those inclined to abstracted art-rock should check this out; it's a bit too over the top for my tastes. (BM)

Global Symphonic, 7624 Sussex Ave, Burnaby, BC V5J 3V8, Canada, www.globalsymphonic.com

From A Second Story Window – Not One Word Has Been Omitted, CD

Yet another great band in the continuing trend of American metal bands defying categorization. At the moment, I can't get enough of the odd time

signatures, breakdowns and sick vocals, but let's just hope that it doesn't get beaten into the ground too quickly. (DH)

Blackmarket Activities, 23 Rand St., Revere, MA 02151, www.blackmarketactivities.com

From Bubblegum To Sky – Nothing Sadder Than Lonely Queen, CD

Made up of '60s-pop-inspired songs that could be catchy after a couple listens, the album has way too much going on most of the time. It's saturated with hand clapping, synth effects and saccharine vocals that don't necessarily warrant those extra listens. (AJA)

Eenie Meenie Records, PO Box 691397, Los Angeles, CA 90069, www.eeniemeenie.com

From Here On Out – As Of January, CDEP

This band is a typical, poppy-emo band—with emotional singing and some screaming—but they're always on the verge of just being a pop-punk band. There's nothing here I haven't heard from 100 other bands, not one musical quality differentiates them. I'm sure the 15-year-olds of America will love it. (EH)

Self-released, www.fromhereonout.com

Frankenixon – Sweaty From Your Uselessness, 7"

Driven by dissonant piano, sparse vocals and the covert influence of experimental jazz, Frankenixon creates an oddly accessible and imaginative style that explores the boundaries of each melody line. This 7-inches' A and B-sides are only samples of longer tracks that stand to be fairly impressive. (CC)

Bi-Fi Records, PO Box 1327, Ames IA 50014, www.bifirecords.com

🔗 **Fuck – Those Are Not My Bongos, CD**

A name like Fuck might make you think this band is a joke, and they don't take themselves too seriously (especially with song titles like "Mother-fuckeros" and "Her Plastic Acupuncture Foot") but these fuckers are for real. In fact, their casual shifts (in vocals and instrumentation)—from the ba-da-ba-ba of garage pop to the slow, brooding trudge and heavy whisper of acoustic intimacy—are so seamless that no other band could produce a melancholy so endearing because they'd just be trying too damn hard. Who'd have thought a band with a name like Fuck could make such an inconspicuously beautiful record of capricious joy? (CC)

Future Farmer Recordings, PO Box 225128, San Francisco, CA 94122, www.futurefarmer.com

🔗 **Future Sound Of London Presents Amorphous Androgynous – The Otherness, CD**

Warm, dark and lush, this new sound project from the Future Sound Of London is replete with golden tones and soft melodies. Written and recorded after Future Sound's Garry Cobain became ill with a mysterious sickness (apparently the result of some ill-advised mercury cavity fillings), this record is the sister recording to the band's previous release *The Isness*. Taken together or alone, Cobain and partner Brian Dougans have created a masterful soundscape of glorious melody and movement. The 14 tracks on *The Otherness* ooze softly into one another and create a harmonious web of complex compositions. I'm looking forward to what Dougans and Cobain come up with next. (JG)

Psycho Baby, www.psychobaby.com

Gamits, The – Antidote, CD

This is the third album from this straightforward punk-pop trio from Denver. They play some catchy, if simple, tunes with an overriding guitar that

has a gentle crunchiness in the clean production. The softer "Bridges" closes the album with a slower and dreamier-sounding piece. (BA)

Suburban Home Records, PO Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204, www.suburbanhomerecords.com

Geisha Girls, The – S/T, 12" EP

A very cool three-song 12" from this LA outfit. They do the Wire/Gang Of Four post-punk/art-rock thing, all disjointed guitars and stiff beats and cool vocals with affected English accents. Gorgeous packaging, including burgundy splattered vinyl and a screen-printed inner dust sleeve, rounds out this fine self-released record. (JC)

Self-released, geishabooking@hotmail.com

Genesis – A Murder Of Crow, CD

This record excites me for the wrong reason, as this band is screamo. Don't ask me what that means. There are two vocalists for this punk band; one sings in a pretty emo voice, and the other screams like there's no tomorrow. I like the parts of the songs without the screaming. (DI)

Vehicle City Records, 629 S. Saginaw St. Flint, MI 48502, www.vehiclecityrecords.com

Giant Haystacks – We Are Being Observed, CD

Wow! This is spazzy, jazzy, jangly punk rock that immediately reminded me of the Minutemen. I've been known to say "If you don't like the Minutemen, there's something wrong with you." There's absolutely nothing wrong with Giant Haystacks and their passionate and provocative take on punk rock. This rules. (JC)

Smart Guy Records, 3288 21st St. #32, San Francisco, CA 94110, www.smartguyrecords.com

🔗 **Gibbons, The – Things I Know And Things I Don't / A Healthy Distaste For Karma, 7"**

Accompanying this record was a note suggesting I might like this 7", and damned if they weren't right on. With a melodic, poppy, yet serious sound, The Gibbons are definitely reminiscent of Broadways or, for those who knew them, John Brown Battery. These kids from Michigan play their hearts out. They have some great, politically charged lyrics that aren't just blanket statements about standard Fifteen-inspired punk-rock political topics. They focus on local and state issues and things they see happening around them. Thanks for putting that note in the 7", guys, because Kyle might not have sent it to me. It is really great. (TK)

Salinas Records, PO Box 20996, Ferndale, MI 48220, www.unshadowed.com/salinas

Gigantor / Easy Grip – split, 7"

Japanese punks Easy Grip play a brand of rock that is heartwarmingly reminiscent of '90s Midwestern pop punk, whereas Gigantor (out of Germany) stick to a more emo-pop-tinged punk sound. (MG)

G-Force Records, Wohlerhof 4, 30900 Wedemark, Germany, www.gforcerecords.de

Gigantor / Fuzz Bubble – split, 7"

Here are two covers of classic-rock songs (Kiss' "Let Me Know" and Tom Petty's "American Girl") that are faithful homages to the originals. This made me scratch my head: Why do almost by rote covers instead of making them your own? If you feel like you need this in your collection, you'll like it. Otherwise don't bother. (JJG)

G-Force Records, Wohlerhof 4, 30900 Wedemark, Germany, www.gforcerecords.de

Reviewer Spotlight: Carla Costa (CC)

Pavement, Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain. There was a cult of us, still is, who understood what Steve Malkmus was saying. How skateboarding and pinball fanaticism hold a direct correlation to disenchantment with the modern world. And the only match for Malkmus' post-post-modern poetry was the frenetic guitars of Mark Ibold and Scott Kannberg, with the mischief of Bob Nastanovich and Steve West's jazz-timed drums further expounding the cryptic messages encoded within. It may have been *Slanted & Enchanted* that laid the foundation, but *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain* is their shining medallion, the one that freeze-framed a splintered world and the cut-and-pasted lifestyle of youth who painfully aware of "alternative" music's shotgun wedding to the mainstream. Decidedly dissonant, a kind of comparative literature lo-fi, and so fucking off-the-cuff cool, Pavement was the alternative to "alternative." The record starts with a tumble of collapsing melody lines and clamoring instruments. A slow, wind-up intro to a record that, in and of itself, is a fuck you to rock standards. On "Fillmore Jazz," Malkmus draws out: "See those rockers with their long, curly locks/say goodnight to the rock 'n' roll era...cuz they don't need you anymore." We didn't. There were few things we loved (technological advances and divorced parents made it difficult for many of us to love anything), but we loved Pavement. Because they were a band who taught us to sweat the small stuff and forget the big picture because everyone knows that's how life really plays out anyway.

On repeat: Lungfish, *Love Is Love*; Imperial Teen, *You're One*; Love, *Always See Your Face*; Dávid Cross, *It's Not Funny*.

**Gigantor / Lolita No. 18 – split, 7"**

Gigantor, a cool, nerdy rock band from Germany, hits you with the catchy "King Dork" on this 7". Lolita is a goofy, female punk band from Japan that sounds a little like the Chipmunks. Two very fun bands from faraway places. (BC)
G-Force Records, Wohlerhof 4, 30900 Wedermark, Germany, www.g-forcerecords.de

Gigantor / StepMothers – split, 7"

Gigantor covers "Bloodstains" by Agent Orange. Do you think you need another cover of this song? The StepMothers give us an original pop slice "(I Dream I'm) Innocent" The best part is the picture of OJ Simpson after trying on the gloves, which made me laugh. (EA)
G-Force Records, Wohlerhof 4, 30900 Wedermark, Germany, www.g-forcerecords.de

Gigantor – Rhythm/Trouble, 12"

This great-looking blue-swirl vinyl contains some of the tightest power-pop punk that I've heard in quite awhile. It seems there is more to the German scene than glam punk and hard rock, and Gigantor are right at the forefront with all the hooks, sing-a-longs and irresistible melodies. (BN)
G-Force Records, Wohlerhof 4, 30900 Wedermark, Germany, www.g-forcerecords.de

Girls, The – S/T, CD

In the late '70s, the punks hated the power-poppers and vice-versa. Finally the two sides come together with The Girls' 2004 debut. It's a perfect blend of snotty punk and sugar-sweet power pop, equal parts amped-up guitars and cold, robotic keyboards. This is Tubeway Army played out to its inevitable conclusion. Excellent. (JC)
Dirtnap Records, PO Box 21249, Seattle WA 98111, www.dirtnaprecords.com

GoBettyGo – Worst Enemy, CD

As a general rule, any band playing the Warped Tour isn't worth the time of day, but GoBettyGo is an exception. An all-girl punk band making their second appearance, they also sing in Spanish. The sound is regular 4/4 stuff with equal parts drums, bass, vocals, and guitar. (DI)
Side One Dummy Records, www.sideonedummy.com

Goldstars, The – Gotta Get Out!, CD

Sixties punk/junk/psyche/garage rock is reborn. The ground's well-tread, but the Goldstars don't go the usual garage-revival route. With organs up front, the stars are closer sonic cousins to ? And The Mysterians than the White Stripes. It makes sense with two of the songs coming straight from the *Nuggets* box set. (RR)
Pravda Records, PO Box 268043, Chicago, IL 60626, www.pravdamusic.com

Goons, The – Nation in Distress, CD

The vocals on this sound a lot like the Misfits. The sound here is somewhere between late '80s and early '90s punk bands, with attitude and speed to spare. The lyrics are standard punk fare: work sucks, the government is evil, the world is shit, etc. Nothing special. (KM)
Reptilian Records, 403 S. Broadway, Baltimore, MD 21231, www.reptilianrecords.com

Gorch Fock – S/T, CD

There's a lot going on here, as I would expect from a seven-piece? The vocals remind me of Scratch Acid, and even though it's noisy in a good way, the horns irritate me. I bet this band would be fun to watch live. Interesting, but not moving. (DA)
Perverted Son Records, PO Box 49290, Austin, TX 78765, www.pervertedson.com

Goudron – Raw Voltage, CD

Even though Goudron's songs are stippled with the *bleep-blips* of mindless pop danceability that made '80s teen-movie soundtracks actually enjoyable (and respectable) doesn't mean everyone with a Casiotone and a mixer needs to make a record. Like soundtracks, this album does best in the background. (CC)
Ersatz Audio, PO Box 02713, Detroit, MI 48208, www.ersatzaudio.com

Goodies, The – S/T, CDEP

Nice, dirty thrash punk from four girls that certainly seem to know how to get the job done. While the poor production adds to their rough persona, it'd be nice to hear the vocals more. Production notes aside, this is a fun seven-song homage to the Sunset Strip of yore. (MS)
Redline Distribution, 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago IL 60609, www.redlinedistribution.com

Gunshy, The – No Man's Blues, CD

Solo albums are, by their nature, self-indulgent. *No Man's Blues*, the second record by The Gunshy, aka Matt Arbogast, is no exception. This album plays like a catharsis, a purging of pent-up anger, love, self-loathing and fear. On *No Man's Blues*, Arbogast is backed by a mélange of musicians. The acoustic guitars, cello, violin and occasional harmonica paired with Arbogast's gravelly vocals lend to the exceptionally mournful, poignant sound. The first track on this album is a bit weak compared to what's to come. It's cluttered with too many sounds, as if Arbogast wanted to give the listener a preview of every instrument that will eventually appear on the album. When Arbogast strips it down in the later tracks, the simplicity of the music and the sincerity of the lyrics are better displayed. Track six is the apex of the album, an upbeat piece that contrasts marvelously with Arbogast's Tom Waits-esque voice. However, those raspy vocals start to grate after awhile, and though this is a great album, if the vocal quality would vary occasionally, *No Man's Blues* could be pure gold. (LW)
Latest Flame Records, 1638a North Astor St., Milwaukee, WI 53202, www.latestflame.com

Half Past Gone – Afloat, CD

I used to write for a Chicago metal magazine in the early '90s, and this totally sounds like the stuff I used to hear. In a retro way it's cool, but this for sure is progressive metal, which means they know how to play their guitars really well. (BC)
Self-released, PO Box 1047 Tustin, CA 92781, www.halfpastgone.com

Half Rounded Bastard File – S/T, 12"

It's hard to classify these guys because they change up their style a little on each track. I can say that they are mostly instrumental, and they really rock. Sometimes they border on midtempo stoner rock, sometimes slow and emo (but in a good way), but then they will jump into a few mathy blast beats. Even though they sound so eclectic, there is no denying that they have their own sound. "Suicide On A Good Day" is my favorite track on here. (At least I think it is, because I am a little confused by the layout, and I can't find my glasses, but all is forgiven because it is on slick-looking clear blue/green vinyl. It's going on my "records to not sell" pile.) (TK)
Primary Thoughts, PO Box 4995, Portland, OR 97208

Hangar 18 – The Multi-Platinum Debut Album, CD

"It's hot hot hot/ like Suzanne Somers/ in the Sudan summer..." go some of the rhymes in "Saved By The Beezy." That's some silly shit, but Hangar 18 nevertheless play some undeniably catchy, retro-sounding

hip-hop, with incisive lyrics and a rapid flow that's damn impressive. The retro feel comes mostly from the numerous elements of '80s synth pop (check "Go Git That"), the old-school drum-machine beats and the bleeps and bloops that sound sampled from an old Nintendo game. But it's damn good, yo. "Boombox Apocalypse" talks about the life changes these New Yorkers faced post-9/11, but it's not cliché or cringe-inducing. The song's introspection is commendable, and the nicely written lyrics (like the Sisyphus reference in "Boombox") show that the trio has some brains. Like a lot of underground hip-hop, this record is mostly free from stupid posturing, though you get some of that toward the end. Also like a lot of hip-hop records, this could use some editing, as the couple of tracks are straight-up filler. Still, *The Multi-Platinum Debut Album* is impressive overall. Hangar 18 are yet another great act in Def Jux's excellent stable. (KR)

Definitive Jux, 451 Greenwich St., #507, New York, NY 10013, www.definitivejux.net

Happy – Sincerely, Without Wax, CD

High-energy poppy rock from Oshkosh, Wis., featuring former H. Chinaski singer/guitarist Andrew Johnson. Although the 13 tracks on *Sincerely* waver between driving intensity and midtempo mellowness, overall, this is a nice offering. (JG)
Doubleplusgood, PO Box 3690, Minneapolis, MN 55403, www.doubleplusgoodrecords.com

Hard Place – Mini, CDEP

By way of the onesheet accompanying this CD, I was skeptical ("Courtney Love's least favorite band"? "A genetic mutation of Queen, Devo, ELO and the Sparks"?). But after listening to this album, all doubts are erased, and my only complaint is that there is not enough. Only a paltry eight songs, this CD is a must for any record-head like me who's nerdy enough to actually read through the entire endless reviews section in this magazine. The Hard Place really are well acquainted with the early 1980s new wave intelligentsia: thinking man's synth punk/rock like Devo, Dickies and especially The Sparks. They are also very well acquainted with the best of the power-pop greats (The Cars, etc). The lengthy songs are extremely well-arranged and orchestrated to a perfect T; catchy hooks are hidden under the guise of a strangely interesting, synthetic, futuristic and orchestratic brand of power pop. Not only is the music addictive, but also I find a great deal of pleasure in the fact that the Hard Place don't rely directly on retro-feel or music recyclery to achieve their goals. God bless 'em. (MG)
Antenna Farm, PO Box 29855, Oakland, CA 94604, www.antennafarmrecords.com

Harkonen – Dancing, CD

Ugly rock music. This is definitely not my thing. They could have redeemed themselves with the Scratch Acid cover, but it only made things worse. Their sound fits their Pacific Northwest origins. (DA)
Initial Records, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Harmann, Daniel G. – The Lake Effect, CD

With a melancholy atmosphere and a soft delivery *The Lake Effect* carves itself a niche between the lo-fi and mainstream acoustic. The sparse vocals and lyrics fit the sorrowful melodies to a T, while the indie-rock influence is carefully weaved into the singer-songwriter formula, creating a fresh sound. (BN)

Post 436 Records, 12511 Ringwood Ave., Orlando, FL 32837, www.post436records.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Czarnik (BC)

V/A, *Achtung Chicago Zwei!* I know that *Punk Planet* spends a lot of time stroking Chicago and its bands, but it really is the best place on earth. One of the greatest compilations ever to capture the area's bands was Underdog Records' *Achtung Chicago!* *Zwei!*, which came out in 1993. The CD version also included the great 1989 edition of *Achtung Chicago!* So, as a bonus you got Screeching Weasel doing "Teenage Slumber Party" and over 10 other great Chicago bands of the time. Back to the 1993 release: I was honored to be a part of it, as a Bollweevil, and we did a song called "Stained Glass." Smoking Popes did their catchy pop-punk tune "Run Away," as well as the hardcore Latino powerhouse Los Crudos with "Pelamos" ("We Fight"). Not Rebecca, Cap'n Jazz, The Vindictives, No Empathy and 8-Bark also appear on this perfect compilation. Oh yeah, and a little angry political band called Prophets Of Rage also somehow got on the comp with us big boys too. A tear comes to my eyes when I think of all the cool things I had hanging around the great Underdog Records collective and all the cool things they did (never on time, though) for the bands of Chicago's punk scene. You can almost hear the fun we all had on this great disc. There also was a third edition of the *Achtung* series, which featured my other band Oblivion, as well as other great acts. It kicked ass as well.

Five latest bands to piss off my leopard neighbors (I live in a big cat sanctuary): 1. AFI, 2. Rooney, 3. The Torch Marauder, 4. Flogging Molly, 5. The Methadones

☞ Hatework – Thrash 'N' Roll, CD

To start with, I'm not a big metal fan, but Hatework embody every aspect of metal that I like. The title, *Thrash 'N' Roll*, is a fitting description of their sound; I hear elements of Motorhead, DRI and Slayer. "I.D.T." starts the album off ripping, and even the straight-edge guys will be yelling along with the chorus, "I.D.T., Italian drinking team!" The dual vocals in "I Don't Care" make it one of the standout tracks. The final track, "Rip The Hush," fools you into thinking it's going to be an epic closer, but then switches into some raging thrash. I love this record, and you will too. (DA)

Beer City Records, PO Box 26035, Milwaukee, WI 53226-0035, www.beercityrecords.com

Haunted Life – The Dust Has Settled, CD

Metallic guitars, screamed vocals alternating with whiny vocals, some fast hardcore breaks—I don't like to resort to rock critic clichés, but isn't this stereotypical screamo? Sorry, I'll try to never use that word again. My point is that this cliché-sounding album lacked anything noteworthy. (JIG)

Underground Communique, 4807 N. Wolcott Ave., Apt. 2A, Chicago, IL 60640

Heaslip, Corey – Wiring Ourselves Up, CD

Stripped down, lo-fi melodies inspired by everyone from Everclear to The Cure, this release should be propelled into the limelight through its reflective writing. There is sophistication in the sound and experience in the lyrics, which should help Corey Heaslip stand out in the suddenly crowded singer-songwriter scene. (BN)

Comsco Records, PO Box 228, N Falmouth, MA 02556, www.comscorecords.com

Heat Sensor – Touch, CDEP

Interesting, left-field, avant-garde hip-hop, and Sound-Ink officially keeps up the good work. This EP sounds like it would fit right in on Anticon, and is just a teaser for what looks to be a great full-length. *Touch* features guest MC spots from M. Sayyid, Apani B., and Kamachi. Good stuff. (DH)

Sound-Ink, 45 Broad St., Quincy, MA 02169, www.sound+ink.com

Heather Hates You – Operation Suckerpunch, CD

This kickass, fast pop-punk band from the Boston area plays manic, high-energy songs with above-average lyrics. The opening track, "Math Class," leads you to expect something straightforward, at least thematically, but the band is surprisingly political and introspective. Heather doesn't hate Heather Hates You. Great stuff. (AE)

Self-released, www.heatherhatesyou.com

☞ Heaven Shall Burn – Antigone, CD

Holy fucking shit. I mean, *holy fucking shit!* For some ridiculous reason I had totally forgotten about this band since I was last acquainted with them, via their 2000 release *Asunder*. Thankfully, Heaven Shall Burn are alive and active and by way of some karma energy bullshit, this CD got to me for review before it got to Hoffa, the *Punk Planet* king of metal. Anyway, H.S.B. are a brutally wonderful death-metal band out of Germany. (The Euro guys always do it better.) They play no-holds-barred, strict metal with a tiny bit of '80s hardcore influence (teeny tiny) and a definite yummy Swede/Scandinavian flavor. Any and all positive metal descriptors can be tossed out for this band: double bass blasts, heavy riffage, screaming solos, etc. Plus, they've injected a much bigger dose of melodics into the music this time around, which brings them right up there with my melodic death metal favorites At The Gates. If that's not enough for ya, they even sing about progressive politics and social issues. What more can you ask for? If you're into metal at all, you must have this! (MG)

Century Media, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250, www.centurymedia.com

Heavy Me – Maximum Ramrod, CD

The hand-stamped cardboard cover had me expecting emo, but Heavy Me play heavy, fuzzed-out, grungy punk. There's a good balance between "the riff" and "the hook," so the songs end up being catchier than they probably ought to be. Not especially original, but damn good all the same. (JC)

Broadmoor Recordings, 112 Broadmoor Drive, Huntington, WV 25705,

www.freewebs.com/heavyme

Helgas, The – Til The Wheels Fall Off, CD

Very cool pop-punk with a healthy portion of roots-rock swagger. Bash away, play some catchy-as-hell hooks, and throw in a few Chuck Berry riffs. Yeah! Check out "Bad Behavior" and "Dream Turned Inside Out." Cool boy/girl vocal harmonies, too, especially on "Down The Drain." Nice one! (AJ)

Pelado Records, 521 W. Wilson, #C103, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, www.peladorecords.com

Hello Goodbye – Heart Attack, CD

Cutesy and catchy bubblegum garage pop by this Scandinavian combo. Great female & male lead vocalists who really shine when they sing together. The stripped-down song structures on the slower numbers evoke the innocence and joy of Beat Happening, while the more rocking songs bring to mind the Headcoates. (JC)

Racing Junior, Brugata 3a, 0186 Oslo, Norway, www.racingjunior.com

Helper Monkeys, The – No Release, CD

The band name is a reference to a *Simpsons* episode that any animation geek like me will get. *The Simpsons* is my all-time favorite TV show, but such a reference won't automatically make me like a band. In this case, the band is all-too-familiar pop-punk, nicely produced, but lacking enough of an edge. Pop-punk has been done to death, and a band that is retreading this familiar territory had better have great lyrics or innovative music. As it is, The Helper Monkeys are forgettable. I think they could have used a better *Simpsons* reference, too. How about The Comic Book Guys or Skinner's Army? (JIG)

Self-released, www.thehelpermonkeys.com

☞ Higgs, Daniel – Magic Alphabet, CD

"*Magic Alphabet*: Daniel Higgs Solo Jews Harp Improvisations" listening diary, entry one: I put in the CD, close my eyes, and the music starts up like an approaching airborne army of insects. When the swarm gets within striking distance, though, the miniature mercenaries lay down their arms and all begin dancing a merry jig in the sky. Entry two: I know it's just a mouth harp, but I swear, it's talking to me. To me? I swore it said my name. Will it say something different the next time I listen? Entry three: The electric hum of the harp is bounding in and out, zapping a thousand miles away and then snapping right back in an instant. Now it's a buzzsaw. Now it's an earthquake. Now it's a snake. Entry four: Now the harp sounds like it's breathing. Like it's screaming. Entry five: A secret source has left an envelope outside of my door. It reads: "This record is a hidden microphone recording of what the interior chamber of the human soul sounds like." This rather extraordinary record is a collection of 17 Jews harp improvisations by Daniel Higgs of Lungfish. It is the second record released on Ian MacKaye's new Northern Liberties label. (DAL)

Northern Liberties, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington, DC 20007, www.discord.com

Hokkaido Concern, The – Circuits Flooded, CDEP

Watch out, because that solid indie-punk bedrock you're strolling along on top of might give way at any minute to a driving, prog-rock instrumental break. Their compositions are intense, moody and expansive, words I nev-

er thought I would be applying to a song titled "David Cassidy Cavity Search." Great guitar work. (DAL)

Self-released, www.thehokkaidoconcern.com

Hold, The – Noisebloodassault, CD

Crusty punk from Nova Scotia that's not streamlined. They call it "noise assault," but I think it's crust punk with too much guitar feedback. Surprisingly, The Hold is pretty successful at changing up punk (at least a little). An almost solid effort that punk-rock fans are sure like. (EH)

Divorce, 2-5310 Tobin St., Halifax, NS, B3H 1S2 Canada

Hopesick – Look What You've Done, CD

The kids just love the scream, especially when blended with that punky, Fat-Wreck-with-metal-breakdowns sound. One singing + one screaming x (went to the Warped Tour five years in a row) = Hopesick. Sure it's a math-rock joke, but it works. I'm not slamming this; I've just heard it before. (DM)

SoFLA Records, 6450 SW 32nd St., Miami, FL 33155, www.softarecords.com

☞ Horns of Happiness – A Sea As A Shore, CD

A side project of a member of the Impossible Shores, this features a lot of tape loops and special effects. My only complaint about the recording (and others like it) is that you have 70 minutes to fill on a CD; you don't need to have so many quick, cut-and-pasted musical styles in one song. Aaron Deer is a product of his commercial music video and computer game generation. Not everyone has Attention Deficit Disorder and needs new or different sonic stimulation every 10 seconds. (DI)

Secretly Canadian, 1499 W. Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403, www.secretlycanadian.com

☞ Hot Flashez, The – Resort to Plan B, CDEP

Out of Flint, Mich., comes this rock 'n' roll, part punk, part garage. What sets this apart are the horns: The band has a trombonist and a saxophonist, and they make the brass integral to the songs. It's a six-song EP that is energetic and versatile with sharp guitars. Dual vocals work well together on a couple songs, and some good change-ups are mixed in throughout. A notable one is "Last Elimination Round," with some feral screams in the background. The lyrics are worth paying attention to—"Your thoughts on Gaudi show your inability to reason"—and reveal signs of intelligent life in their songwriting. I'll include another good one: "Mr. Heidegger's worldliness was never meant for you." More rock songs should have such philosophical slams. (BA)

Duffmeister Records, 159 Durand St., East Lansing MI 48823, www.duffmeister.net

☞ Houston McCoy – ST, CD

This is another great instrumental band that I wish had a singer. I realize with a singer you run the risk of off-key vocals, livejournal-calibre lyrics or snakeskin pants, but instrumental bands always seem to be lacking a key element of a great band. Although Houston McCoy almost makes up for it with just their instruments. Featuring two guitars, bass and drums, this band produces more feeling than a hundred nut-hugger-wearing screamo singers writhing on the floor. Thunderous drums lay down the beat, subtle bass lines meander in the background as duel guitars battle for rock supremacy. They are judged both by their musical versatility and by their basic rock prowess. At times the music gets laid back, almost jazzy, but not soon after they're into their predominant hard-rock sound. Whereas hard rock focuses on showmanship and swagger, Houston McCoy lets the talented guitarists and powerful music take center stage. There is a final secret song that includes only a repeated line of words, but even that brief vocal exam-

Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

Moonstomp, They Never See. Brave New World, Pittsburgh's finest punk record store, relocated in early January 2004 to a giant new location with an impressive stockpile of used vinyl. I kept eying the 1989 Moonstomp LP on Link Records, but I figured I really didn't need yet another doopy skinhead record. What I didn't know was that it was one of the best U.S. oi albums of all time. If ever there were a lost classic LP, this is it. This 14-track album dates back to when oi was so underground in the U.S. that U.S. oi bands were still being put out almost exclusively by U.K. labels. Moonstomp, like the Anti-Heros, were from Atlanta. They sang about typical working-class issues, and their lyrics are even funnier than those by the current oi parody band Oi! I don't tend to buy into the concept that as a subgenre becomes more popular, the bands begin to lack the vitality that their predecessors had. But other than being one of the earlier bands in the U.S. that blended U.K. oi with American hardcore, there's no other explanation as to why this LP is so essential. If you can't find the LP, it's also apparently available on a split CD reissue from Step-1.

These records are making 2004 a better year than 2003: Hit Me Back / Out of Vogue, *split*; The Winks, *S/T*; Mary Celeste, *Our Guernica*; Descendents, *Cool To Be You*; The Thermals, *Fuckin' A*.



ple shows that Houston McCoy would be an even deadlier threat with a vocalist at the helm. But maybe they and the world aren't ready for that yet. (NS)
Earnest Jennings, 68 Cheever Place, #2, Brooklyn, NY 11231, www.earnestjennings.com

Human Breed – Among Millions Of Faceless Human Beings, CD

Take some hardcore with deep vocals then mix in some metal, and you have Human Breed. They put in a good effort with this album, but the intros are way too long on every song. There's nothing here that's different from any other metal-infused hardcore band. Mediocre at best. (EH)
Tuned To You, 1026 De La Voie Ouest Lévis, QC G6Z 1J9, Canada, www.tunedtoyou.com

I Am The World Trade Center – The Cover Up, CD

The band with *that* name's latest offering is a sweet collection of heady, romantic synth-pop that takes its cues from Berlin and Blondie. But the layers beneath their production polish could use the same urgency and rough edges that created the volatile sexiness and raw emotion of their predecessors. (CC)
Gammon Records, 111 E. 14th St., Suite 179, New York, NY 10003, www.gammonrecords.com

Icy Demons – Fight Back, CD

An interesting mix of laid-back experimental rock and electronica featuring members of Need New Body and Bablicon. Mass layering, atypical instrument usage and delicately arranged movements combine to construct an engaging full-length. Folks who enjoy the psychedelic side of rock and/or the early German electronic genre should give this a listen. (BM)
Cloud Recordings, PO Box 821, Athens, GA 30603, www.cloudrecordings.com

Impulse Manslaughter – Live at WFMU, CD

I think I got all the thrash records for this issue. These live recordings are actually audible and well done, which is a major plus. The music is rocking death thrash that would be perfect for skating around town or trashing your bedroom. Nothing new, but still pretty good. (KM)
Beer City Records, PO Box 263035, Milwaukee, WI 53226-0035, www.beercityrecords.com

Intwoscars / Fingers Crossed – split, CD

It's rad to see independent labels and bands pop up internationally. At the least, their effort is appreciated. Unfortunately, on this split there's not much redemption to be found. Both bands (the second being slightly stronger) from Athens, Greece, play sappy, Velveeta-covered, dare I say, emo. (BM)
R&C Records, 6 Ampatielou St. TK III 44, Athens, Greece www.ride-n-crush.gr

Itch, The – S/T, 7"

Cheesy, generic hc/rock. Three of the five songs are boring instrumentals that sound like a bunch of simple riffs thrown together, and you're like "Where's the singer?" But then the singing is so bad on the two other songs that it makes you appreciate the instrumentals all the more. (JC)
Wee Rock Records, PO Box 333, Springfield, MO 65801, www.weerockrecords.com

Izzys, The – S/T, CD

The Izzys are a competent dirty south rock 'n' roll band. Drawing heavily from The Stones and, at times, Hank Williams, the album is slightly above

par. Its main drawbacks lie in a somewhat bland, demo-like production and occasional lyrical shortcomings. (RL)
Kanine Records, PO Box 404, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, www.kaninerecords.com

J Church – Society Is A Carnivorous Flower, CD

Hot damn, it's inspiring to see a band sound so strong after playing for more than a decade. Of course, J Church's current line-up is pretty new, but singer/guitarist Lance Hahn is in fine form, and the band around him is perhaps the strongest he's had. "Overconfident" and "Keep Smiling America," the first two tracks, are gems of energetic, hook-filled, cerebral pop punk—the style J Church has effectively mastered. Second guitarist David DiDonato totally smokes, and his contribution to this record would be hard to overstate, as there's an unprecedented technical force to J Church's attack now. (Check out the solos.) Also unprecedented is the 15-minute album closer and title track, a song that takes its cues from The Who's "A Quick One While He's Away." It's an unbelievably ambitious medley of several songs that mine one of Hahn's favorite lyrical topics: the workers' revolution. It's not exactly commie rhetoric, and Hahn's imagery and esoteric style give the story an artistic flair that bands such as Propagandhi sorely lack. Hahn, as usual, gives you plenty to think about but delivers it in his unmistakable, catchy style, and J Church has never sounded better. Long live J Church. (KR)
No Idea Records, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.noidearecords.com

Jet Boys, The – S/T, 7"

It is really, really hard to listen to "I Shit My Pants," a one-minute song including fake shit sounds. It's a dumb joke, but the two tracks on the flip-side are just bad garage songs with a early hardcore twist. Yuck. (EA)

Black Lung Records, PO Box 7101, Norfolk, VA 23509

Jet Boys – Jet Patrol, CD

Old-school punk rock from Japan, where such things still exist. Despite some rather silly lyrics ("Do not do sex with my friends/ do not apply the voice friendly!"), the raw and aggressive delivery are enough to keep this in my player for awhile. Sung both in English and Japanese, even if it's difficult to differentiate between the two, the songs are rapid, raw and serve as a painful reminder of just how commercialized recent U.S. releases are. "No Need To Change" is easily worth the price of the record. Seek this one out whatever it takes. (BN)
Self-released, www2.ttdh.ne.jp/~jetboys

Jeunesse Apatride – Black Block 'N Roll, CD

French-Canadian punk/oi band with boring, generic punk riffs and slightly-more-emotional-than-deadpan female vocals that grated on my nerves. Even the occasional cool melody couldn't sway my distaste from this uninspiring and unoriginal release. (KM)
Fire and Flames, Role STR. 3, 37073 Göttingen, Germany, www.fireandflames.com

Joel R.L. Phelps & The Downer Trio – Customs, CD

Phelps' flat, off-key voice is neither strong nor likeable enough to support such jarring guitars and percussive fiddling. The other "pieces of the song puzzle" aren't fitting together, either. I really disliked this album. I under-

stand it's supposed to be "challenging rock," but "challenging" doesn't have to mean "unlistenable." (AJA)
Moneyshot Records, c/o Tim Cook, #1, 424 Summit Ave. E, Seattle, WA 98102, www.moneyshotrecords.com

Johnny Action Figure – S/T, CD

Just another band singing songs about broken hearts and the shit that follows. There's one problem though: The songs lack emotion, and the writing lacks familiarity with the topic. Furthermore, there's absolutely nothing about this record to distinguish it from the gazillion other "emo" bands out there. (BN)

19 North Records, PO Box 244, Reading, PA 19603, www.19north.com

Jude The Obscure – The Coldest Winter, CD

Have you heard Converge's *Petitioning The Empty Sky*? Then you've heard this. Lots of chug, semi-thrash-metal rhythms, the screaming, the singing. I mean, that was a decent period for Converge, so if you're looking for more of the same, you've found it here. (NS)

Onedaysavior, PO Box 372, Williston Park, NY 11596, www.onedaysavior.com

Just A Fire – Light Up, CD

The first album by this trio featuring former members of Hoover, June Of 44, Sweep The Leg Johnny and Abilene. They have been around long enough that they have earned functional Ph.D.s in noise. There's nary a wasted second on this record, in which satisfying riffs are lodged in every corner and musical ideas tumble down in an unpredictable onslaught. I love how, in a song like "Graduation," they flirt with Jamaican rhythms but not in an obvious or a tired way. It's subtle and bizarre. They do something similar with international rhythms in the allegorical "Snake In That Bush," which adds to the subversive quality. The patterns are then turned inside out on a later track, "Gradubation," in which reggae rhythms are cut up with cosmic phasers doing battle and far off echoes of pointless space screams. The vital originality of the music is matched by strange and smart lyrics that are fittingly evocative, like "here's a special report/ from this third world resort/ stopping port to port / she's a hot export/ devised in a boardroom under lock & key/ by the FDA/ in the land of the free." (DAL)
Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Kadane, Matt And Bubba – Music From The Film Hell House, CD

The bros from Bedhead and The New Year score the music for this fine documentary about a Christian haunted house. It's what you'd expect: glimmering indie rock instrumentals that patiently test the listener's mettle. Without context, it's aimless background noise with only few bursts of the Kadane genius. (VC)
Pleximusic, 560 Broadway, Ste. 1004, New York, NY 10012, www.pleximusic.com

Kalpana – Hors De Combat, CD

Heavily instrumental and heavily anarchic, this very complicated post-hardcore madness is full of mature musicianship. Vocals are used sparingly and low in the overall mix. I can't tell what instruments are being used, but I think some of the string instrumentals are actually computerized or synthesized. Oddly engrossing. (AE)

Redder Records, 1600 East Ave., #605, Rochester, NY 14610, www.redderrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)

Pixies, Surfer Rosa. In light of recent Pixies-reunion mania, I just wanted to highlight their most loved album. Some (most everyone, actually, from just about every rock critic in existence to David Bowie) say that this is their best record: a weird, shrieking, alt-rock classic that put the Pixies on the map and went on to influence just about every major "alternative" that came after them. I can't say if this is my favorite Pixies album (I love them all), but this is definitely the one to get for Pixies first-timers. It includes a couple of their most well-known songs, "Gigantic" (a disturbing, ethereal song, one of the very few sung by bassist Kim Deal) and "Where Is My Mind" (once my favorite Pixies song, until it was overplayed during the whole *Fight Club* hubbub, after which the song was eternally ruined for me—I hate it when bad films use great songs!). But the truly stellar tracks here are the balls-out, schizo, über-surreal rockers "Bone Machine" and "Broken Face," two songs that really didn't sound like anything else that had been done at the time. A brilliant record and a record collection must.

Reviewer Spotlight: Julie Gerstein (JG)

Velocity Girl, 6 Song Compilation. Nothing says summer fun like Velocity Girl's breezy, girl-fronted melodies. Although weather here in Philly has been less than agreeable, it's hard not to have a good time with Sarah Shannon on the stereo. The band's eponymous six-song debut EP (from the now-defunct Slumberland Records), which is nearly impossible to find these days, is an utter pop classic. Fusing the feedback fuss of late '80s Britpop with '60s American girl-pop groups, this record has explosively good tracks, including VG's breakout hit, "Forgotten Favorite," as well as "I Don't Care If You Go," performed both acoustically and electrically. While Velocity Girl unfortunately sputtered and died somewhere during the mid-'90s (and went on to mostly failed solo projects), there's no denying that the band's earliest material is easily its best and most resonant today.

Here's what I'm reading and listening to this summer: Slumber Party, *Three*, Her Space Holiday, *The Young Machines*, Gravity's (goddamned) Rainbow, for Don Malkemes' summer reading book club.

Kickz – Activate Me, CDEP

Pure punk rock from this very young Dallas foursome. This is great, snotty, catchy punk with a garage feel and a definite late '70s appreciation. The Kickz will fit right in with the growing underground r'n'r/punk scene (once they're old enough). (MG)

Pelado Records, 521 W. Wilson, C 103, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, www.peladorecords.com

Kid606 – Who Still Kill Sound, CD

Acid, jungle, neo-rave and routine music for cheerleaders on crystal meth. Miguel Depedro (a.k.a. Kid606) can mix any of them into mind-blowing tracks that not only use tweezers and twitters to lay out a narrative but that demand movement from your feet to your fingers. (CC)

Tigerbeat6, PO Box 460922, San Francisco, CA 94146-0922, www.tigerbeat6.com

Kill Creek – The Will To Strike, 2xCD

Kill Creek has been around since 1986, together off and on, losing members here and there, but always remaining a major influence on the Kansas, Kansas City and Lawrence music scenes. They brought around a sound and a DIY ethos of which bands such as The Get Up Kids, The Casket Lottery, The New Amsterdams and The Anniversary have long been disciples. This 45-track, almost-three-hour-long double disc is a retrospective of the heyday of this band's career, including some of their best songs released from 1989 to 1999. It follows the band's development from young punks to pop purveyors to a more mature Westerberg-esque style laced with hints of alt-country. This is an excellent compilation for those just getting into Kill Creek. And for old fans, it's a well-assembled collection of the best of this band, from albums that are now mostly out of print. (LW)

Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 413084, Kansas City, MO 64141-3084, www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Kill Drama – Shift Focus, CDEP

Kill Drama plays great emo hardcore with tough vocals to make them stand out in today's crowded emo scene. The lyrics are completely indecipherable and unintentionally hilarious. The drumming is unusually complex too, making this a surprisingly powerful release if you can get past the goofiness of the lyrical ramblings. (AE)

Self-released, 9126 Scenic Dr., Brighton, MI 48116, www.killdrama.com

Kill Sadie – We're All A Little Sick, CD

Post-humous release from the Twin Cities "post-hardcore" quintet. Does the genre "post-hardcore" bother anyone else these days? I mean, granted 10 years ago it might have actually meant something, but currently it seems to be a nicer way of stating "emotional dudes who've listened to a couple of Fugazi albums and seemed to kind of like them." If that is your working definition, then Kill Sadie is in fact an excellent "post-hardcore" band. However, if you're not interested in the bland screaming and juvenile uses of electronic drum machines associated with the aforementioned definition, I recommend you go elsewhere. (MS)

Satellite City, PO Box 3478, Hollywood CA 90078

Kill Verona – Trauma, CDEP

The last time I checked in with these rapsallions, they were doing their best Saves The Day/Lifetime impression all over the Philadelphia area under the moniker Little League. Not surprisingly, these brotherly lovers have now "matured" their sound, changed their name and seem poised for the big leagues (no pun intended, well, maybe). These five songs have that pristine Vagrant sound down pat, but it fails to keep me interested. Maybe their inevitable transition into ambient rock will prove to be a more interesting listen. (MS)

Live Wire Records, PO Box 007, Mendham NJ 07945, www.livewire-records.com

King Radio – Are You The Sick Passenger?, CD

King Radio is another outgrowth of the disbanded Scud Mountain Boys, the mostly quiet alt-country group that was lead by Joe Pernice. Here, Frank Padellaro records folk-pop songs arranged with the careful orchestration of strings, piano and French horns to complement the pedal steel, acoustic and slide guitar. A typewriter adds some percussion to the bells and drums. Some of it is a little happy for my tastes, but this is certainly pleasant stuff—

Reruns: new reissues from punk's past.

Alternative TV – Strange Kicks, CD

This band featured Mark Perry of the famous early punk-rock zine *Sniffin' Glue*. Their first single, *Action, Time, Vision*, was a masterpiece. Talked into recording this line-up by Miles Copeland of The Police for his upstart IRS records, the band recorded this reunion disc in 1981. Unlike their early records, *Strange Kicks* is a big-time pop record. It's not the groundbreaking sound that ATV are known for; in fact, it took me years to buy this, even after owning all their early records. I never gave this record much of a chance years back. Maybe I've matured, but this record is damn good. I now love this disc, though the bonus live tracks found on the CD version aren't really necessary. Mark Perry and Alternative TV should be right up there with The Fall. If you like the late '70s/early '80s punk/new wave sound and don't own this reunion record, pick up the disc. (EA)

Overground Records, PO Box 1NW, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, NE99, UK, www.overgroundrecords.co.uk

Antidote – Thou Shall Not Kill, CDEP

A small part of NYHC that's John Joseph (Cro-Mags) approved. Fast, furious and in your face like any band from that scene was. All hXc with some rocking out solos on this former 7". This piece of history has been welcomed into my collection. (DM)

Helibent Records, PO Box 1529, Pl. Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742, www.helibentrecords.com

Channel Three – Live!, 12"

Channel Three's official live document of the their first ever European show. Originally released in 1994 on Lost and Found, CH3 burns through 15 tracks of great punk rock. One of the better live recordings of any band you will find. (EA)

Re-Force Records, Wöhlerhof 4, 30900 Wedemark, Germany, www.re-forcerecords.com

Coalesce – Give Them Rope She Said v2.0, CD

Fucking punishing, this ferocious CD sounds possibly more timely now than it did in 1997. Remastered with new artwork, it features Coalesce's much-copied use of metallic elements in their fierce hard core. Buried, screamed vocals provide an extra bit of angst. With little variation, though, the songs tend to blend together. (KR)

Edison Recordings, www.edisonrecordings.com

Couch Flambeau – I Did A Power Slide**In The Taco Stand: Anthology 1982-2001, CD**

For years and years, this punk-as-fuck joke band from Milwaukee has avoided rereleasing their early material on CD, since it's mainly remained available on cassette and vinyl. They've finally caved in, and the result is this outstanding instant classic of wacky, spastic goof songs. It's technically an HDCD, but it plays on any ordinary CD player, too. You get a whopping 37 songs, ranging from the band's first cassette-only release in 1982, to their full LPs, to live radio

tracks and a couple of unreleased obscurities. Wisconsin aficionados will appreciate some of the outrageous anti-Cudahy (a town south of Milwaukee) sentiment included on the songs "You Must Be From Cudahy" ("You must be from Cudahy/ I know you/ stay away/ you don't have a lot to say/ I don't like you/ go away") and the remarkable "Santa Claus Skips Cudahy." Couch Flambeau is one of those bands that got written about here and there, but hasn't had much exposure for a band that's been around for 20-plus years. Hopefully this stellar compilation will change that, because these guys are a total crackup. (AE)

Self-released, PO Box 270004, Milwaukee, WI 53227, www.couchflambeau.com

Cuts, The – S/T, CD

The Cuts play highly conceptual garage punk with a classic-rock influence. They're pretty obnoxious and end up sucking as much as most of the classic rock that caused people to play punk rock in the first place. This is the CD reissue of their surprise hit first LP. (AE)

Birdman Records, PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90050, www.birdmanrecords.com

Hellstomper – Are You From Dixie?, CD

YES!!! All of Hellstomper's best out-of-print material is back onto one slab of plastic, and we Confederacy Of Scum aficionados can rejoice and act for a few minutes like the D.I.Y. record industry cares about us. Compiled here are the nine tracks from Hellstomper's seminal split release with Before I Hang, four live tracks from the 1997 *Supershow* CD, and the 7" version of "Back To Berkely [sic]," their hilarious "fuck off" response to the jerky PC-zine fascists that falsely accused them of bigotry in the '90s. For the uninitiated, Hellstomper play southern fried punk, with a bigger country influence than any of the other currently popular C.O.S. bands. They cover old country tunes and create new country-punk classics of their own. Their lyrics are far from shock-based and are instead comical tracks about country living. Neither a joke band, nor a band to take too seriously, Hellstomper is underrated and never dull. I recommend this CD over any of their other currently available releases, and I believe that anyone into both country and punk will simply adore it. (AE)

D-FENS Records, PO Box 72275, Newman, GA 30271, www.listen.to/D-FENSrecords

Junior Achievement – Fade To Black, CD

Cool skatepunk/HC from Phoenix, originally released in 1984. Flyers in the CD booklet show them having shared stages with 7 Seconds, JFA, Youth Brigade and Bad Brains, and fans of those bands would probably dig this. I do. (JC)

Malt Soda Recordings, Box 7611, Chandler, AZ 85246, www.maltsoda.com

APZX Skateboards, PO Box 97910, Phoenix, AZ 85060, www.apzx.com

Negatones, The – Snacktronica, CD

A rerelease of their 2003 college-radio hit record, this combines electronics, noise, cheap instruments and other odd noises to create music for college kids doing drugs. You know the kid: He would have listened to Pink Floyd 20 years ago, The Flaming Lips 10 years ago and the Negatones today. (EA)

Melody Lanes Recording Co., 50 S. Sixth St., #1, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.melodylanes.com

Rebelation – Steppas, CD

This reissue contains the debut LP and four bonus tracks from the *Where Is Your Soul* EP to boot. This is a great throw-back collection of reggae roots/ska with elements of soul and dub from this UK band. This is a quality release for those rude boys and girls still left out there. (DM)

Do the Dog Music, 26A Craven Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5NE, UK, www.dothedog.com

Stepmothers – You Were Never My Age...And More: The Complete Posh Boy Recordings, 12"

Early punk can sound very dated, and this admittedly classic record is no exception. Campy as hell, this band that existed from 1977-1983 nonetheless made some catchy tunes. The singer, Steve Jones (no relation to the Sex Pistol), went on to sing for the legendary fast metal band Overkill. Recommended. (AE)

Re-Force Records, T. Drescher, Wöhlerhof 4, 30900 Wedemark, Germany

Three Johns, The – Live In Chicago, CD

Originally released in 1986, *Live In Chicago* is dark, gloomy punk that shifts from atonal to melodic and features a lot of slide guitar. The singer resembles a more restrained Nick Cave from his Birthday Party days. He got on my nerves, and nothing impressed me enough to make me want to check out more music by this band. Rereleases are generally for albums that should be heard again. This one made me wonder why. (JIG)

Buried Treasure, 162 Congress St., Brooklyn NY 11201

Warmers, The – Wanted: More, CD

If you're like me, and there is no one like me (gratuitous early Warmers reference), then when you heard there was a new Warmers record you promptly shat yourself with glee. Perhaps you're just finding out now, so if you need to take a minute to dispose of your Depends then go ahead. Don't get too excited, though, the group featuring DC superstars Juan Carrera, Amy Farina, and Alex Mack-aye hasn't regrouped or anything, but Dischord has been kind enough to release these six tracks the band recorded in 1996, right before breaking up. The Warmers' truly unique hardcore snake-charmer sound is on full display here with songs every bit as intense and artful as those on the band's earlier full-length album, but even catchier. (DAL)

Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington, DC 20007, www.dischord.com



perfect with cocktails at a picnic. For some songs, the dense arrangements compensate for melodies that probably wouldn't shine as well on just a solo guitar, like the Peanuts gang decorating Charlie Brown's scrawny Christmas tree. On a few, the lush adornments can't hide the song's limitations. At its best moments, though, the album can be psychedelic in its lavish production. The hidden track is a tired gimmick, but the instrumental after the long silence of the "final track" still is a fine closer for the album. Apparently, they will tour with a 10-piece mini-orchestra to try to capture this album's sound live. (BA)

Spirthouse Records, 116 Pleasant St., Suite 3410, Easthampton, MA 01027, www.spirthouserecords.com

☞ Kinski – Don't Climb On And Take The Holy Water, CDEP

Kinski's press release refers to the Seattle threesome as "lysergic punk," and because I didn't know what lysergic meant, I looked it up in the Webster's and found out it means "of or pertaining to LSD." So I guess what these guys are saying is that they are trippy punks. But the thing is they're just more trippy than anything else—there ain't nothing punk on this record. Witness the second track on *Don't Climb On...*, "The Misprint In The Gutenberg Print Shop," a 29-minute dirge that never quite gets off the ground. All in all, it's good enough stuff for high times. (JG)

Strange Attractors Audio House, PO Box 12007, Portland, OR 97213, www.strange-attractors.com

Kitty Little / Kiss Ups – split, CD

Raucous, punk-rock-fueled fun from the Kiss Ups and Kitty Little from Buffalo, N.Y. Those these bands don't sound exactly alike, but it's clear that they travel in the same circles, and that's mighty fine. I'd like to see this rock 'n' roll line up live. (JG)

Art of the Underground Records, 3234 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14214

Kiwi – Anarchists Have More Fun, CD

Hand-sewn packages and cute, eight-tracky pop punk stuff with nice keyboard solos (somebody's parents paid a shitload in piano lessons) and the usual angst-pro-revolutionary lyrics ("it's about changing the world while changing ourselves"). I bet these guys score hot girlfriends out of this record. (JG)

Burn It Down/Rebuild, 153 East 17th St., Huntington Station, NY 11746, www.burnitdownrebuild.com

Kodan Armada / Gospel – split, CDEP

Kodan Armada bring it—three tracks of intense, techy screamo insanity that sweep me back in time to the '90s emo/hardcore scene. Gospel sorta does the same thing, but they play a calmer and more laid back variety, making me wistful for bands like Downcast and Angel Hair. (MG)

Cosmonaut, 99 Main St., New York, NY 10960, www.cosmonautrecords.com

L.A. Tool And Die – Fashion For The Evildoer, CD

Poppy, light-sounding records from an eclectic band featuring a classically trained bassoonist. Some wacky moments make this a fun listen, and the overall atmosphere, fueled by the singer's mod-nasal-peppy voice, give this the quality of a Wes Anderson film soundtrack. (DAL)

AAJ Records, PO Box 241595, Charlotte, NC 28224-1595, www.aaajrecords.com

La Ghetto – Sonate In Bu Minore Per Quattrocento Scimmiette Urlanti, CD

Super-pissed DIY Italian hardcore that starts things off with an anti-Bush sample. The midtempo music is dark, with two guys screaming over each other, and it occasionally reminds me of bands like Tragedy. It has lots of cool basslines, but it wasn't enough to hold my attention. (KM)

Self-released, www.welcome.to/la ghetto

La Mi Vida Violenta – We Are Ghosts, CDEP

Blustery freeform with horns aplenty. Parts of it sound as if they took the *Night Court* theme, set it on a griddle and then had Bull do a stream-of-consciousness flow on top all the mayhem. It's all so interestingly off-kilter and unplaceable that some good drugs must have been involved. (SM)

Self-released, 2042 Main St., Apt. 6, Three Rivers, MA 01080, www.angelfire.com/ma3/myviolentlife/

☞ Larsen – Musm, CD

Rich with eerie soundscapes, Larsen's latest release will sweep listeners off of their feet, deep into the dark abyss of the human condition. With no vocals present, the band is able to speak and communicate so vividly through their instruments that it's as if they've written a language of their own. Not permitted to see the band, Michael Gira of the Swans produced and recorded the record from behind a veiled screen. Seemingly, Larsen live and create their artwork in an eccentric and obsessive manner, scrutinizing every note and detail in their path. If this is some sort of musical cult, the testament being put forth is one of a beautiful, twisted enlightenment. (BM)

Enterruption, PO Box 884626, San Francisco, CA 94188-4626, www.enterruption.com

Le Concorde – S/T, CDEP

Self-important indie-pop from former members of the Psychedelic Furs and the band Post Office (apparently best known for their "Play Post Office" stickers in the background of *High Fidelity*). The six songs on this EP are listenable but unremarkable, save for "Manhattan Chase," a track that manages to crescendo nicely. (JG)

Spade Kitty Records / self-released, www.leconcorde.org, www.spadekitty.com

Demo-lition Derby: CD-Rs

Akasha – I Rock, You Rock, We All Rock For Iraq, CDR

They shuffle genres like a croupier with ADD. Muppet-like yelps are slopped on top of hardcore riffs while a soothing violin meanders in the back. (DAL)

c/o Revolutions, 1000 South Cooper, Memphis, TN, 38104

Boomjack – S/T, CDR

Very confusing EP that jumps from jock rock to '80s hard rock. Needs more focus. (MP)

www.boomjack.com

Chasing the Yellow Line, CDR

CTYL sound a lot like NUFAN and Millencolin, but without the slick production. Not bad, but I think they're a little late for this stuff. (MS)

www.chasingtheyellowline.com

Chrome Pistola – Belly Of The Beast, CDR

Two fucking great, political hip-hop tracks, with an additional instrumental version of each and a radio edit of the title track included for good measure. (AE)

www.chromepistoia.com

Cotton Ponies – Seven Songs, CDR

This is some often dark and off-kilter rock from Boston with almost Cramps-esque vocals. Fairly interesting—sounds like they would be good live. (BA)

www.cottonponies.com

Dancin' Squeegee Men – This Is A Toast, CDR

Often quite fun, even humorous, but other times quirky and silly. Numerous tracks mostly involve keyboards and facsimile drums with bedroom production. Please, reconsider the rap. (BA)

deadmission@hotmail.com, riversansom@hotmail.com

Declaration of War – S/T, CDR

Live recording of typical thrash/hardcore band. Not bad, but the vocals could've been better. (MP)

PO Box 57314, Atlanta, GA 30343

Driving Forward – In Motion, CDR

Alkaline Trio lite. The singer's voice is a cross between Matt Skiba and an '80s bar rock singer. They're a little dramatic, but with some decent guitar and drum parts. Their sound just isn't "driving" enough. (NS)

www.drivingforward.net

Foxx, The – S/T, CDR

The Fox draw their rock 'n' roll sound from the hair metal heyday of bands like Faster Pussycat and L.A. Guns, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Catchy, fun stuff. (AJ)

010 Gold Ave. SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102, www.the-foxx.com

Heavy Water – Angry Ballerina, CD

An angry blend of hardcore, rock and the tendency for experimentation. The instrumental intro and "Angry Art" are the two songs worth hearing. (BN)

www.markusabused.com

☞ Jung Robot – Graphic Music, CDR

Holyshit Batman, a horribly hilarious album inspired by various comic books. Visions of nerdy, acne-plagued, pseudo-goths fantasizing about becoming Spider-Man come to mind. (BM)

<http://tci.homestead.com/jungrobot.html>

Morbid Checkers – Death Of A Salesman, CDR

Really odd, garagey rock, with an interesting cover of Screaming Weasel's "I Hate Led Zeppelin" included

among the duds. Cool stickers and hilarious artwork almost make this enduring, but not quite. (DH)

www.morbidcheckers.tk

☞ Nathan Crowley – S/T, CDR

Holy shit! There was no info with this CD, and it took me completely by surprise. High-pitched, creamy hardcore with insanely tight drum and guitar work. Plenty of grooves to keep things interesting amid the chaos. These four songs are not enough. Should they record a full-length, it could be the best of its kind this year. Fucking amazing. (DH)

www.nathancrowley.cjb.net

One Day We Die – Live From The Grog Shop, CD

Mid-tempo indie rock, with traces of hip-hop and mainstream rock influences, that's marred by the horrendous sound quality. Here's some advice: Don't record live demos. (BN)

www.onedaywedie.com

Quarterlife Crisis – Forget The Time, CDR

This is multifaceted, aggressive punk that rocks it out in a very catchy way: fast, furious and fun. Expect more good things from QC. (DM)

Quarterlife Crisis, www.thanks4nothing.com

Quiet Life – S/T, CDR

Four songs from a New London band that spices up their pop songs with multi-instrumental cowboy eruptions. Not bad. (DAL)

quietlifeband@hotmail.com

Teen God – S/T, CDR

Three-piece (without a bass) from Australia plays grungy Britpop with screamo vocals. OK tunes. Reminiscent of My Bloody Valentine at times. (AJ)

Self-released, 24 Mackenzie St., Brunswick, Victoria 3056, Australia, teengodaustrial@hotmail.com

Ten Thousand Tongues, CDR

I really dug this until the singers opened their mouths. Musically efficient, vocally not so much. (MS)

www.noise-maker.com/tenthousandtongues

Tremoflex9000 – S/T, CDR

This EP put me to sleep, but then I'm a buffoon. If you have more refined tastes, you might appreciate this melodic "electronica/lounge core/chill out project." (DAL)

<http://home.earthlink.net/~vandyken>

Tups, The – Getting A Head In Federal Canadian Politics, CDR

Poorly played, poorly written, poorly recorded hardcore. Sounds like lightning fast versions of The Germs' "Sex Boy." All of it. Annoying. (AJ)

the_tups@yahoo.com

Yoshi – From A Western Box, CDR

An effortless combination of electronica, hip-hop and the stylized mood of ambient. Yoshi lays down tight tracks with smart vocal infusions and political narratives. (CC)

yoshi@nefsa.co.uk, www.nefsa.co.uk

Les Georges Leningrads – Deux Hot Dogs Moutarde Chaude, CD

Spazzy, herky-jerky dance freaks, please report to the front. You are being paged by the screwy megaphone growl and hypnotic, guttural creep-noise of Les Georges Leningrads. Accept their offer of lo-fi waltzes for monsters and enjoy, mon ami. Enjoy. (CC)

Allen 8, 4060 boul. St. Laurent #602b, Montreal, QC, H2W 1Y9, Canada, www.allenrecordings.com

Les Sans Culottes – Fixation Orale, CD

The name of the band means “poor laborers” from the French Revolution, and the band plays ‘60s pop songs with lots of harmonies and fuzzy guitars. Rodney on the ROQ would love them, but the French lyrics are too much for me. There is nothing revolutionary here. (DI)

Aeronaut Records, PO Box 361432 Los Angeles, CA 90036, www.aeronautrecords.com

Libido Grande – Wrecked, CD

Decent, simplistic punk that stirs up memories of early ‘90s skate-video soundtracks. Strong singing and some solid hooks make for a record that should be well received amongst fans of late-era SNFU and Pegboy. (BM)

Failed Experiment, 5420 S. Bishop St. Chicago, IL 60609, www.failedexperiment.com

Lightwires, The – S/T, CD

Soft emotional (but not exactly “emo”) rock with a bit of alt-country and shoe-gazer type stuff thrown in for good measure. Jeremy Pinnell sings like he’s about to burst into tears at any moment. Maybe I’m just a cold-hearted bastard, but it makes me laugh. Cry, baby, cry! (AJ)

Tiberius Records, 4280 Calappa Dr., Independence, KY 41051, www.tiberiusrecords.com

Li’l Cap’n Travis – ...In All Their Splendor, CD

What can I say? These Texans’ third release is pretty damn good. It’s filled with jangly, country-tinged rock, with peaks of ‘60s California sunshine. The lyrics tell stories of how it used to be and the four vocalists draw you in each time. (MP)

Glurp Records, PO Box 685163, Austin, TX 78768, www.glurp.com

Lil’ Hospital, The – I Wanna Be Well, CD

The Lil’ Hospital is so twee: ‘60s pop sparkle filtered through a four-track’s natural, bright melodies filtered through Pro Tools. The result is a pop sound so gleaming and white that your brain actually goes *twawweeeeeee*, as if a signal has interrupted its normal frequency to bring you some super-sugary goodness. (CC)

Best Friends Records, PO Box 48214, Denver, CO 80204, www.bestfriendsrecords.com

Links, The – Einmal Ist Keimai, CD

I would say this quirky pop-punk band out of Tokyo are “da bomb,” but that wouldn’t be funny, now would it? Good music for all you kids good at math and stuff. (BC)

Stiffen Records, Root Kyoudou Bldg., 3F-C-1-25-1,7 Kyoudou Setagaya-ku Tokyo, 156-0052, Japan

Lisa – Little Contest, CDEP

Tepid emo-pop-punk is truly international. This French band might be better served writing trite emo-by-numbers lyrics in their native tongue. In

English, they read like a piss take. Otherwise it’s straight up cookie-cutter clean “punk” polished up and ready to move units. (RR)

Skewed Records, PO Box 331, Cedarburg, WI 53012, www.skewedrecords.com

Lisa Dewey And The Lotus Life – Busk, CD

Rarely does anything remind me of the Cocteau Twins, but this does. Perhaps it’s because its ethereal sound is aided by Simon Raymonde, who was with the band for many years. Here he contributes as a multi-instrumentalist on piano, bass and guitar. Lisa Dewey’s acoustic lap steel and 12-string guitar add an earthiness to the sound as well—and it helps that she sings in a recognizable language. Most songs are swooning and dreamy with almost hypnotic melodies, though it suffers a bit from sounding like an album from the ‘80s. This is released from her own label out of San Francisco. (BA)

Kitchen Whore Records, 20700 Almaden Road, San Jose, CA 95120, www.kitchenwhore.com

Little Wings – Magic Wand, CD

Something about Little Wings feels reminiscent of the smoky aura of the best ‘70s folk pop. Maybe it’s the way *Magic Wand*’s tales of hang-your-head despair, flickering and fleeting hope and cascading love are delivered through the hazy nonchalance of Kyle Field’s tin-panned vocals. Or maybe it’s the easy intertwining of electric guitar into piano, of tambourine into brushed snare drums or a banjo like the short ringing of deep-toned bells. To their advantage, Little Wings lack the organs and heavy-handed song structure that made tracks from that era (like “Whiter Shade Of Pale”) amazing in their drunk, bearded brilliance but overwhelming as entire albums. It’s Little Wings’ casual, organic melodies that make their sound so resounding and comforting in its misplaced memory. (CC)

K Records, PO Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecords.com

LKN – In The Leap Year, CD

This is one amazing release from a woman who practically wrote and played every instrument on the record. The off-kilter melodies and angular guitar lines bring a more melodic and rock-based Sonic Youth or Unwound to mind. Overall, the sound is rockin’ indeed, and I can definitely see this on Matador or some similar label. In fact, the vocals kind of sound like a cross between (old) Liz Phair and Helium. However, the wailing singing style she occasionally uses can be a bit much and might put some people off. There’s modern influence throughout, as well as some influence from the classic-rock spectrum, but mostly this sounds as though it was released in the mid-‘90s. I haven’t heard a lot of music done in this style recently and even less of that music is done well—this release is the exception. (KM)

Grey Day, PO Box 2086, Portland, OR 97208-2086, www.greydayproductions.com

Log – Log Almighty, CD

Carefully constructed, poppy indie rock that at times reminded me of Guided By Voices—minus the whole “carefully constructed” part. The only flaw of this record was the vocals, which were drowned out by the music/recording and weighed heavily on the sprightly songwriting. (AJA)

Anyway Records, www.anyway-records.com / Old 3C Records, 4268 Colerain Ave., Columbus, OH 43214, www.old3c.com

Loose Change – S/T, 7”

If I had heard this in 1997, it would’ve blown my mind. Today it sounds pretty solid, like the better aspects of Fat Wreck Chords. They’re from the same town as AFI and share a member with that band, so that sound creeps in a bit too. (DA)

Phantom Sound Records, PO Box 991053, Redding, CA 96099, www.phantom-sound.com

Los Filthys – Pint Of No Return, CD

Straight-up mid- to fast-paced punk, with run-of-the-mill lyrical subject matter (relationships, drinking, suicide). It’s hard to form an opinion on this because everything about it is so average. Not horrible, but not recommended. (DA)

Self-released, lostillthysuballies@yahoo.com

Lost & Found, The – S/T, CD

Lost & Found’s debut is a well-made, straight-forward rock record that is both accessible and thoughtful. Easy-on-the-ears-vocals and stripped down guitar playing solidify the debut; it’s nice they’re not caught up in a lot of needless garbage. (AJA)

Status Recordings, PO Box 1300, Thousand Oaks, CA 91358, www.statusinc.com

Loud Clappers – At The Smash Party, CDEP

The Loud Clappers are an indie-rock band from Boston who apparently don’t know the mid-‘90s are over. The band places sing-speak lyrics over phaser-driven guitars in a “we can rock, but not too loud” kind of way. I like it. (RL)

Self-released, www.loudclappers.com

Love Like...Electrocution – S/T, CD

Australian hardcore that explodes in orgies of screams and hyperactive drum rolls, then recedes into more spaced out yelping, then catches fire once more. There’s a certain funkiness in how some of the shoutfests are structured that makes this stand out, as does the way the songs build in intensity to insane climaxes. (DAL)

Building Records, 15 Cross St., Fullarton SA 5063, Australia, www.buildrecords.com

Low Beam – Every Other Moment, CDEP

Low Beam plays slowly paced indie rock in the vein of Yo La Tengo—long songs, slow-moving melodies, but with mostly whispered and/or distorted vocals. I like Yo La Tengo; Low Beam is a different story. (AJA)

Cosmodemonic Telegraph/Hozomeen, No. 46 State St., New London, CT 06320

Lubricated Goat – The Great Old Ones, CD

With a new line-up, Lubricated Goat has returned the studio to rerecord many of their old songs, with good results. The songs rock hard, but stay interesting with vocals that resemble a punk rock Captain Beefheart and music that reminds of their contemporaries like Scratch Acid and the U-Men. This CD sounds like a bad trip, but in a good way. (JIG)

Reptilian Records 403 S. Broadway, Baltimore, MD 21231, www.reptilianrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Jason Gooder (JIG)

These Michelle Gun Elephant, Gear Blues. This full-length album was divided into four different 10” records and pressed on white vinyl. It is a garage-punk album made in ‘99, before the great garage gold rush, before it was known you could actually make money playing garage rock. Nevertheless, I have read that this band were big stars in their native Japan, and it is not hard to see why. *Gear Blues* distills the best from ‘50s and ‘60s rock ‘n’ roll and amps it up to a dangerous level. I saw this band when they came to the States, and it was one of the best shows I have seen. I wondered, “Why can’t more American bands do American rock ‘n’ roll this well? Is rock ‘n’ roll more sacred to those who aren’t from this country and don’t take our musical heritage for granted?” But this isn’t the kind of music to analyze. Simple, pure and classic, it will probably sound as good to me 20 years from now (if I still have my hearing).

Some Music I’ve Been Listening To: 1. The Ponys, *Loaded With Romance* (I gave this a lukewarm review in the last issue, but it’s grown on me), 2. The Ramones, *Anthology 3*. The Husbands, *You Need Hands 7”*, 4. The Blacktop, *I Got A Baaad Feelin’ About This*, 5. The Switch Trout, *Psycho Action*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Emily Hausman (EH)

Swing Kids, Discography. It would be safe to say that Justin Pearson is the maestro of the San Diego music scene. He has been in a countless number of really great bands, and Swing Kids is just another one. So for all you Locust fans, here is another masterpiece by Pearson. This album is spastic, frantic and chaotic, but can be straightforward and melodic. There is almost an eerie feeling to this album. You feel like they are going to take you to the brink of total chaos, and then they pull you right back in. It’s awesome because it’s not your typical *chugga-chugga* hardcore. This album has great, solid guitar work that’s not flashy—not to mention an amazing Joy Division cover. This record is raucous, noisy and boisterous. What sets Swing Kids apart from other hardcore bands is that they are not metal and not predictable; they have a punk-rock sensibility. This record is awesome. All hardcore fans need this record.

The following stuff is radical: 1. Mötley Crüe, greatest hits, 2. NWA, greatest hits, 3. Roy, *Big City Sin And Small Town Redemption*, 4. The New Transit Direction, *Wonderful Defense Mechanisms*, 5. Orchid, *3/T*.



Lucero - That Much Further West, CD

Ephemeral alt-country rock that seems to move along at a turtle's pace. I have to admit I have a short attention span, and listening to this CD really tried me. Although nicely produced, the songs don't really build to anything powerful. Somebody needs to light a fire under this band. (JG)

Tiger Style, 401 Broadway, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10013-3005, www.tigerstylerecords.com

Lucida - S/T, CDEP

This band features both male and female vocals and a garage-rock style, but they also have the ability to smooth it out with a bar-room ballad that have you and your girl dancing out on the floor and have you crying in your drink (in that order). Sure, the mod sound is all the rage right now, especially out of NYC. But these kids are from Chicago, and they want to prove that Chicago can shake its ass just as well if not better than NYC. Keep your eyes and ears out for Lucida; you will not be disappointed, especially if you dig that dance rock the kids are all raging about. (DM)

The New Beat, 3100 Sevier Ave. Knoxville, TN 37920, www.thenewbeat.net

M. Sayyid - Outside The Box, CDEP

The guy from Anti-Pop Consortium that's not Beans, M. Sayyid spits some dark rhymes over equally dark and oddly catchy beats. This is one of those records that's kind of like a car crash: You want to look away, but something makes you keep staring. Another full-length I'm looking forward to. (DH)

Sound-Ink, 45 Broad St., Quincy, MA 02169, www.sound-ink.com

M's, The - S/T, CD

Riding on the heels of their great EP from last year, the M's offer us an equally fun full-length full of more Marc Bolan/T.Rex worshipping glam/pop/r'n'r. (MG)

Brilliant, PO Box 578780, Chicago, IL 60657-8780, www.brilliant.com

Machine Go Boom - Thank You Captain Obvious, CD

Clearly influenced by Guided By Voices, singer-songwriter Mikey Machine perfectly emulates Bob Pollard's wavering vocals and has probably practiced his Pollard-esque jump kicks in front of the mirror once or twice. The 14 tracks on *Thank You Captain Obvious* are highly energetic and enjoyable and worth a listen or 10. (JG)

Collectible Escalators, 10803 Lake Ave., #202, Cleveland, OH 44102, www.collectibleescalators.com

Madeline / Saw Wheel - split, 7"

The Madeline side moseys along with an indie/folkie song and female vocals. The Saw Wheel side sounds like an old Irish folk ballad with just a harmonica and guitar. These were both good, but too traditional for my taste. (JG)

Hill Billy Stew Records, PO Box 82625 San Diego, CA 92138-2625, www.hillbillystew.com

Mandell, Eleni - Afternoon, CD

Eleni Mandell has a touch of smoke in her voice. Her best songs are mostly country-noir in the somewhere in the vein of Neko Case or the more accessible Kasey Chambers, though not quite reaching the emotive power of either. Sometimes the neat production can take the soul from these songs. (BA)

Zedtone Inc., 440 Markham St., Toronto, ON M6G 2L2, Canada, www.zedtone.com

Manta Ray - Estratexa, CD

Latest release from this ambient art rock band from Spain that has been around since 1994. Mellow and hypnotic, it's good listening for a hangover. Hypothetically of course. They ratchet it up a bit toward the end, but even when it gets loud, it's still smooth and restrained. (DAL)

Film Guerrero, PO Box 14414, Portland, OR 97233, www.filmguerrero.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Dave Hofer, King of Metal (DH)

Kill the Slavemaster, S/T. This group was initially formed by an ex-member of tech-metal heroes Creation Is Crucifixion, and the influence shows. Unlike Creation, Kill the Slavemaster injected their brand of technical metal with a heavy dose of Slayer and mosh parts for good measure. It's like strapping down someone just because they look crazy—it just can't hurt. This four-song EP was the only thing that the band ever managed to record and release (on the Cyberrdine 243 label), and I'm kind of glad. Had they recorded a full-length, it could have been the best thing ever or the most boring, rehashed thing you'd ever heard. Making me go back to these four brilliant songs over and over again says something in and of itself: This band, at that moment in time, had it. Don't ask me what "it" was, but I've almost been in more car accidents air-guiting along with this CD than any other. Most likely, you'll only be able to track this down here in Chicago or their hometown of Milwaukee, but feel free to write to me care of *Punk Planet*, and I'll hook you up. Every serious metal fan should hear this.

The Defeatists Prayer: Eyedea And Abilities, *E&A*; Tower Of Rome, *Demo*; The Killer, *Better To Be Judged By 12 Than Carried By 6*; Rotten Sound, *Murderworks*; NWA, *Niggaz 4 Life*.

Maritime - Glass Floor, CD

"I can't live my life like a pop song anymore," croons Davey von Bohlen in "Sleep Around," but the former frontman of The Promise Ring (backed by former TPR drummer Dan Didier and ex-Dismemberment Plan bassist Eric Axelson) has definitely returned to his pop roots. "Sleep Around" sounds like Britpop, a sound echoed in later tracks such as "We've Got To Get Out." "Someone Has To Die," with its somewhat unsettling lyrics ("someone has to die/ to make room for you and I"), bounces with the energy of von Bohlen's old band's poppiest moments. But it's not exactly a return to TPR's more popular sound; "King Of Doves" is orchestral pop, with sweeping melodies and vocals and a sleepy tempo. *Glass Floor* is a mostly subdued, acoustic affair, but the extra instruments (piano, mellotron, cello, trumpet, horns, vibraphone) and J. Robbins' top-notch production give the songs a full, vibrant sound. Although there are moments reminiscent of TPR ("Adios," "If All My Days Go By"), and TPR fans who felt jilted by the band's swansong will probably like this, it's still new territory for the band. And it's a record that's growing on me with each listen. (KR)

Desoto Records, PO Box 60932, Washington, DC 20039, www.desotorecords.com

Marah - 20,000 Streets Under The Sky, CD

This record is a guilty pleasure. Considering I'm a punk-rock purist, this leads to serious meditation. Marah is from Philly, and Jon from Superchunk is sitting in on drums. The record sounds like a '70s soul-and-funk mix that you'd expect to hear on the Little Steven's Garage Radio Show. The problem with this record (and the radio show) is you can't tell what year the songs were recorded. The record is really well-produced and layered with vocal harmonies and miscellaneous instruments (slide guitar and harmonica). Do I like it? No, but that doesn't mean others won't enjoy it. (DI)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Marked Men, The - On The Outside, CD

Mod-style rocking punk from Seattle's Dirtnap Records, this has more ballsy and Ramones-type influences than most scooter-riding mod-rock bands out there today. A good, high-energy disc. (BC)

Dirtnap Records, PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111, www.dirtnaprecs.com

Marlboro Chorus - Entangled, CDEP

More sugary, quirky tunes from these brilliant pop mavericks. These new tracks bring out a somewhat matured, rock-oriented sound rather than being straight-up sweet pop, rounding eclectic influences from Sebadoh to Apples In Stereo to Lou Reed. Recommended. (MG)

Future Appletree, PO Box 191, Davenport, IA 52805, www.futureappletree.com

Martinis, The - Smitten, CD

Take away the vocals, and you basically have a Pixies album. Go figure, Joey Santiago is the guitarist. Unfortunately, it's not Black Francis or Kim Deal singing. But Linda Mallari does a pretty decent job, and this catchy power pop album will grow on you. (MP)

Distracted Records / self-released, www.distractedrecords.com

Marvels, The - Cheat To Win, CD

The Marvels are a powerful New England bar band, with some of their songs on the catchier, poppier end of punk and others on a seedier, more aggressive side. It's a mixed bag, but a handful of the songs are truly great, making the album worth checking out. (AE)

Abbey Lounge Records, 3 Beacon St., Somerville, MA 02143, www.abbeylounge.com

Mary Celeste - Our Guernica, CDEP

Herky-jerky dance punk with an interesting sound. Heavy on bass and drums, they feature fast, jazzy beats, quick, note-driven guitars, fuzzy bass lines and dual vocalists who alternate between singing and yelping. Good, semi-poetic lyrics to boot. A definite band to look out for. (NS)

Hope Records, PO Box 71154, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, www.hoperecords.com

Mary Tyler Morphine / Munition - split, CD

This was my first exposure to MTM, and though I have Chicago pride, they come across as The Donnas trying to be tough. Pretty boring. Munition suffer from thin production, and their midtempo punk rock needs all the help it can get. A mediocre split from two mediocre bands. (DH)

Failed Experiment, 5420 S. Bishop St, Chicago, IL 60609, www.failedexperimentrecords.com

Mattoid, The - Hello, CD

The Mattoid is an anomaly much like his homeland of Finland, a country known for its weird, wonderful take on life—like sitting in steaming sauna sits then romping naked in the snow—which is to be expected in a land of endless daylight. With *Hello*, The Mattoid makes his own playful, wicked darkness. The foundation is tar-coated, jangly rock riffs that are the stuff rock classics are made of, but The Mattoid undoes and reconstructs with uncanny melodies and a signature rhythmic guitar style he calls "sango." His vocals waltz from booming baritone to a whiskey-drinkin' Muppet's growl, stopping to add some spry pop stutters and crooning reprises along the way. The songs somehow awaken an untapped appeal in old-fashioned rock 'n' roll that everyone had forgotten was there, like seeing dusk after months of noon-day sun. An absolutely infectious, luminous and resonant record. (CC)

Cleft Music, PO Box 330976, Nashville, TN 37203, www.morphius.com

Maximum RNR - S/T, 7"

Two tracks of Nashville Pussy-style rock 'n' roll. Full out guitars and cock-strut vocals makes this one cool little single. Both tracks hover around two minutes and end without getting too repetitive, which leaves you wanting more. (EA)

Self-released, PO Box P62-275 King St. East, Toronto, M5A 1K2, Canada, www.maximumrnr.com

McColley, Rob - Insults To An Ex-Girlfriend, CD

A verbose record from this Nick Drake-inspired singer-songwriter. The musicianship is strong, but the lyrics are a bit weak. McColley is obviously smart and likes to show it. Some of the best work of this genre relies on the "less is more" principle. (How many lines are in "Know" by Drake?) (RL)

Self-released, www.parasol.com

Meat Purveyors, The - Pain By Numbers, CD

The Meat Purveyors play a style of music that virtually defines the term "country punk." If these tunes were being played on electric guitars accompanied by a hard back beat, they'd be awesome melodic punk tunes. But that's not their bag. This four-piece plays instruments long associated with bluegrass music—mandolin, fiddle, dog bass and acoustic guitars—and there's not a drummer in sight. So when the grid goes down, and everybody with a Les Paul and a Marshall stack is shit outta luck, The Meat Purveyors will still be rockin' on, strong as ever. Aside from the killer songwriting, the most compelling part of their sound has to be the vocal harmonies of Jo Stanli Cohen and Cheryl Diamond. They combine their parts like some kinda two-headed sideshow freak that shares one body, one mind, one (broken) heart. They're *that* dead on. If you've resisted checking out any of this "alternative country" stuff in the past, I'd highly

recommend starting with *Pain By Numbers*. It's not all that twangy (probably 'cause it's more bluegrass-influenced than honky-tonk), and the rockin' nature of tunes like "TMP Smackdown" and "Paint By Numbers" should be fairly accessible to punk ears. (AJ)

Bloodshot, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60618, www.bloodshotrecords.com

Mexican Cheerleader – Kings And Kings' Hoots, CD

Excellent second full-length from this amazing Chicago rock band. I don't own another album where each song could stand on its own as not only a sitcom theme, but also simultaneously driving and catchy enough to where I could sing along without knowing the words. (DH)

Underground Communique, 4807 N. Wolcott, Apt. 2A, Chicago, IL 60640, www.undercomm.org

Midgetmen, The – High Life, CD

The Midgetmen play a mix of guitar-driven indie rock with poppy leanings. A couple songs made me think of a cross between Sonic Youth and The Cars, and I know that sounds crazy, but there you go. The recording is rough around the edges, and I like it that way. (JC)

Self-released, www.themidgetmen.com

Midlake – Bamnan And Slivercork, CD

Spacey rock with detached vocals, Midlake overlaps different sounds—pre-set keyboard beats, heavy organ playing—to make some interesting combinations and set the scene for songs about hot-air balloons and incidental death. However, it's not enough. Although their lyrics stayed engaging, the music and vocals became monotonous. (AJA)

Bella Union, 14 Church St., Twickenham TW1 3NJ, UK, www.bellaunion.com

Midnight Creeps / Capo Regime – split, CD

The Midnight Creeps and Capo Regime both play similar, unimaginative '77-style punk. The bands round out their songs with Dixie Chicks-esque diatribes toward Bush and songs questioning the validity of GG Allin's catalogue. These two bands are far too ambiguous lyrically and, unfortunately, ubiquitous. (RL)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston MA, 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Midnite Snake – S/T, CD

This is fuzzy, acid-tinged instrumental rock that recalls Blue Cheer, Iron Butterfly and even the MC5. Definitely heavy on the retro fare, Midnite Snake do a great job with this late '60s psychedelic-biker-rock sound, but sloppy musicianship and repetition leave a gaping hole where the vocals should be. (MG)

Birdman, 441 Victory Blvd., Suite C, San Francisco, CA 94080, www.thebirdmangroup.com

Mindflayer – It's Always 1999, CD

It's Always 1999 is 21 tracks of droning, garbled, blastoid noise from space-travel fanatics/primitive video-game geeks. Tailor-made for stoners with a secret, physical dependency on death metal. (CC)

Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

Misery Signals – Of Malice And The Magnum Heart, CD

Following the tragic loss of two members, Misery Signals return with an unbelievable vengeance. It's metallic hardcore, but with Devin Townsend at the helm, the ante to perform must have been upped. Most bands within the genre wish they were as tight as these guys. A fantastic and devastating release. (DH)

Ferret Recordings, 167 Wayne St., #409, Jersey City, NJ 07302, www.ferretstyle.com

Mr. Move, The – The Future Of Uncouth, CD

Five electronic rap songs sung by a deranged white boy. The cover art (a

girl's butt and a spoon) is very offensive cover art, but really I never get offended, so it's just a little gross. (BC)

Self-released, 302 Eastern Parkway, Apt. 5C, Brooklyn, NY 11225, www.themmove.com

Missing Pilots – Dispassionately, CDEP

Like an indie version of *OK Computer*-era Radiohead, Missing Pilots brings on the mope, and it's oh-so-good. The twang of guitars and lilting vocals create a tender, melancholic atmosphere warmed by the record's down-tempo melodies. A new band, these guys are definitely bound for greatness in the sad-bastard scene. (JG)

Eidus Records, PO Box 90303, Pittsburgh, PA 15224, www.eidusrecords.com

Modulator – Don't Hold Out on Me, CD

The sticker says "Listen to Modulator on MTV's *The Real World*." So either Modulator play their female-fronted, over-produced pop on the show or are in the show. This is what the masses will think of as a return to New Wave. Typical big-budget blandness. (EA)

Self-released, www.modulator.org

Motorhome – Commando, 7"

If two of the three song titles are Arnold Schwarzenegger movies, does that make this a concept record? Either way, all three songs are the raw, dirty rock 'n' roll side of punk rock: whiskey-n-cigs vocals, blazing leads and bulldozer drumming. Snort an eight ball and spin this. (RR)

Infringement Records, PO Box 1224, Eugene, OR 97440, www.infringementrecords.com

Mottek – Hypnose, 12"

Decent early-'80s style HC from Der Vaterland. The music is fast and well played, and they sure sound angry, but since the lyrics are in German they could be singing about puppies and make-out parties for all I know. Wouldn't that be something? (JC)

Re-Force Records, Wöhlerhof 4, 30900 Wedemark, Germany, www.re-forcerecords.com

Motumbo's Hospital – Sharks & Anglers, CD

I hear a DC element here that reminds me of Jawbox, Bluetip or more recently K-Line: lots of powerful guitar rhythms with flashes of style and strongly sung vocals. Occasionally the guitar takes a backseat to the fierce rhythm section during slower moments, but this is mostly is hard-hitting, guitar-driven post-hardcore. (NS)

Self-released, www.gomoho.com

Mouthus – S/T, CD

Blips, bleeps, explosions and white noise fill this loud and abrasive instrumental debut. This potential mess is well collected and composed. The Brooklyn band knows when to stop, keeping this aural assault in check. (MP)

Psych-O-Path Records, www.psych-o-path.com

Munition – The Black Wave, CD

This Illinois punk band recalls good times and drinking beer with your buddies. They're decent, middle-of-the-road punk tunes with heavy guitars and singing that comes from the gut. Cool. (BC)

Failed Experiment, 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago, IL 60609, www.failedexperiment.com

Mute – Sleepers, CD

For those who miss the days when Strung Out were the driving force behind more mainstream punk, this is for you. Speedy pop-punk with no spine. Their onesheet bills them as "a blast from the past." More like "aghash from the past." So bad the cat just left the room. (DH)

Milk and Cookies, C.P. 48058, Quebec City, QC, G1R 5R5, Canada, www.milkandcookiesrecords.com

My Hotel Year – The Curse, CD

Hold out for the up-tempo numbers on this 11-song LP. Harmonizing with perfect execution, they try to sell standard songs about wanting chicks, holding chicks forever, never letting a specific chick go, etc. When they're right ("If Seventeen Seconds Could" and "The Strongest Man Alive"), they're extremely right. Probably touring with Midtown. (SM)

Heinous Records, PO Box 10788, Murfreesboro, TN 37129, www.heinousrecords.com

Doghhouse Records, PO Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623, www.doghouserecords.com

My Own Worst Enemy – No Guarantees, CD

No Guarantees has its ups and downs considering it moves from delightful indie pop to brooding alternative-rock territory. Its former formula is the more likeable, with such songs as "MIA" and "Hey Hey Sunshine." Singer Steve Prygoda's charismatic voice has a familiarity to it without sounding recycled. (AJA)

Elis Eil Records, PMB 37, 75-22 37th Ave., Jackson Heights, NY 11372, www.eliseil.com

Mystery Girls – Something In The Water, CD

This garage-punk band has hints of '60s bands the Sonics, early Rolling Stones, the 13th Floor Elevators and the Stooges. They also sound a bit like the Makers at their most frantic and wild. A solid CD from these Green Bay lads that is sloppy enough to keep it interesting. (JJG)

In The Red Records, PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90050, www.intheredrecords.com

Name Taken – Hold On, CD

Hey Mercedes was the first band that came to mind when I popped this disc in, and my opinion didn't change much upon further listening. Good, punchy, melodic rock that's all the rage these days, but unfortunately they're just another sheep in the flock. (DH)

Fiddler Records, 8023 Beverly Blvd., #5, PO Box 440, Los Angeles, CA 90048-4523, www.fiddlerrecords.com

National Acrobat, The – TNA: The Complete Recordings, CD

The discography from this talented Louisville band. They were lumped in with noise-rock bands, but they were more straight-forward and less self-indulgent than most. Swirling guitar melodies, shouted vocal bursts and a thick rhythm section. Seventy-seven minutes is a little much, but in small doses, it's pretty good. (NS)

Initial, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Naysayer, The – Kitten Time, CD

Kitten Time, the third full-length from Anna Padgett and her revolving cast of musicians, is an inviting work of somber simplicity. Drifting back and forth across the fine line between indie-pop and minimal folk songwriting, Padgett uses her soothing voice and oddly direct lyrics to rekindle a suffocating genre. (BM)

Red Panda Records, www.redpandarecords.com

Nekromantix – Dead Girls Don't Cry, CD

OK, the music seriously rocks—fast as hell psychobilly. All right, but the vocals and goofy-ass lyrics ruin it. The singer has an unappealing voice to begin with, and his attempts to get all gritty and hellbilly just sound forced and contrived. Ah, what might have been. Bummer. (AJ)

Hellcat Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.hell-cat.com

Neurosis – The Eye Of Every Storm, CD

This CD is like a prog-rock opera: The songs are slow, spacey and drawn out, like four songs in one. Sometimes there's just a deep voice with some back-

Review Spotlight: Don Irwin (DI)

The Blast, It's In My Blood. This is one of my favorite and greatest records of the '80s West Coast punk scene. In 1987, my two loves were Slayer's *Reign In Blood* and *It's In My Blood*. On the other coast, it was all about love, peace and Revolution Summer. This CD includes the *School's Out 77*, which also has the Cooper and Germs covers on it. It's fitting because the my original cassette was the soundtrack to my 1987 high school graduation, and I blasted it out my Sentra's small stereo system—the same Sentra that took a carload of punk rockers down to Fender's Ballroom in Long Beach to see the band play. What makes this record still stand out? The bass is upfront on the intro to "Only Time Will Tell" with the rhythm section and lead guitar fighting for the next five minutes of the song. *It's In My Blood* spans the whole spectrum through Black Flag's career. I remember listening to the album and feeling all this rhythmic speed that enticed you to jump into the pit, but the guitarist created all this noise using unconventional chords and methodically picking each note. Only Mary Timony, of Helium, comes to mind as a guitarist who has created the same sounds since.

NP: Tangerine Dream, *Stratosfear*; Yeah Yeah Yeahs, *Fever To Tell*; Black Eyes, *Cough*; The Warmers, *Wanted: More*; Trouble Funk, *Live And Early Singles*; Channels; and Rancho Notorious, live and KVHS 90.5 FM, Concord, Calif., radio.



ground noise. Sometimes it sounds like there's an entire orchestra. Other times it's crushing and fuzzed. Glad to see they're as nascent as ever. (NS)
Neurot, PO Box 410209, San Francisco, CA 94141-0209, www.neurotrecordings.com

New Brutalism – Territorial Reconstruction, 12"

Loud guitar rock akin to bands like Dazzling Killmen, this is the kind of stuff I'll never get tired of if it's done right, which these guys do. Driving rock with just enough groove and change-ups to make it fun to listen to. (DH)
ABC Group Documentation, c/o Jeremy Stabile, 264A Elmira Place NE, Atlanta, GA 30307

New Lou Reeds, The – Screwed, CD

Quality blues rock that could get confused for something originating from below the Mason-Dixon line. But Minnesota and all her beautiful lakes claim these Lous as their own version of The Black Keys. (SM)
Exit Stencil, PO Box 3777, Minneapolis, MN 55403, www.exitstencilrecordings.com

New Mexicans – Chicken Head Talking Diamonds, CD

A well-done job on the post-post-mathrock-post-hardcore-post-indie, rhythm-heavy artrock tip. However you may categorize this band, they sound damn good. Reference points: Milemarker (without the synths), Drive Like Jehu, even Shellac and Fugazi. (MG)
Under the Needle, 1205 E Pike St., Ste. 2G, Seattle, WA 98122, www.stuckundertheneedle.com

☞ New Radiant Storm King – Leftover Blues 1991-2003, CD

Sometimes when you read a good book you don't recommend it. Or when prodded to produce the title of the last good one you finished, it escapes you. Perhaps, if you don't disclose, it will just be a secret exchange between two good pals (you and the author) and no one else. There's something about exclusivity that is deliciously appealing. It could happen that those people listening to New Radiant Storm King back in the early '90s were hogging them like the greedy little porkers they were, hip-checking and never name-dropping. Joe Pernice and Guided By Voices were in on the cover-up, swearing by the Massachusetts two-piece's plexiglass songs that were shiny and impenetrable. Air-tight in their construction, these lost singles and b-sides could fool anyone as to their place alongside the finest of the fine. (SM)

Contraphonic, PO Box 2203, Chicago, IL 60690, www.contraphonic.com

Newcomb, Simon – Chacho, CDEP

Instrumental music that does some genre-hopping, moving from an acoustic, organic sound into electrical noise and back again. The different sounds merge briefly for a drum drive track beset by swirling background noise, and the record ends with pure ambience. (DAL)
Fall Theory Sounds, PO Box 981341, Ypsilanti, MI 48198-1341, www.falltheory.com

1956 – Tonite We Kiss, CD

Buzzed-out post-hardcore guitar riffage falls into a very dark and heavy alt rock musical gene pool, like Quicksand teetering on the brink of Tool. Weird and scary, but clean, well-arranged and sounding pretty damn good. (MG)
CopterCrash, PO Box 6095, Hudson, FL 34667-3095, www.coptercrash.com

☞ No Choice – Dry River Fishing, CD

When the first track kicked in with a great bass line, I thought I was gonna love this CD, and I couldn't help thinking that I had heard it before. Then a week later at work, I was listening to one of 30 old MRR Radio shows I burned to CD to entertain myself while dealing with asshole customers, and

it was the first song they played. Unfortunately, the rest of the CD didn't really keep up with that first song, "If Logic's First (We're Coming Second)." The lyrics are excellent, and the music reminded me of Snuff or Guns n' Wankers. I just think I have heard it all from the two mentioned bands, and I don't need anymore. Even so, there are some great songs on here, whether it has been done before or not. (TK)

No Idea Records, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.noidearecords.com

No Doctors – Hunting Season, CD

This is really growing on me, but it's hard to explain. At first I thought it was like Jon Spencer without the blues. The whole CD sounds like it went through a fuzzbox. To top things off, the massive guitar noise are all acid washed for a bebop jazzy quality. (DI)

Go Johnny Go, PO Box 6425, Minneapolis, MN 55406-0425, www.gojohnnygo.com

No More Fear – One Thing We'll Share, 7"

More foreign straight-edge hardcore with a really tight and polished sound—a little *lopolished*. Small criticisms aside, you could do a lot worse than this record. If you enjoy this style, you should enjoy this record. (DA)
Goodwill Records, C.P. 15319, 00143 Roma Laurentino, Italy, www.goodwillrecords.net

No Turning Back – Damage Done, CD

Generic, old-school Dutch hardcore. It's hard to differentiate the tracks due to the repeated chugging guitar riffs with predictable distortion. Clichéd lyrics, such as "You better roll with the punches/ Don't even try to fight back" and "I can't take it anymore/ It's time to settle the score" don't help the lacking originality. (LW)

The Noizz Music Company, Spekstraat 44, 6223 BM Maastricht, The Netherlands, www.noizz.nl

Noah's Apathy – The Pacific, CD

Big choruses that could hang around for a half-hour after listening can't save the overall playability of this modern-rock delinquent. There's not much separating these boys from dandies like 3 Doors Down and Five For Fighting. Atrocious? No. Enjoyable? Depends on whether you liked what you heard during rush-hour traffic. (SM)

For Documentation Only, 5140 Crayton Place S., Naples, FL 34103, www.fordocumentationonly.com

NoExit – Obsessions, CD

Tripped the fuck out: NoExit is one man playing either tenor sax, soprano sax, or something called a *bamboo à corde*. The instruments are then processed with various amounts of distortion, delay or reverb. Free jazz indeed. Listen and split your head open. (RR)

Self-released, www.noexit.ch

☞ Nomeansno – The People's Choice, CD

The People's Choice is a career-spanning retrospective of one of the longest running and most vital North American punk bands. The song selection was purportedly chosen via fan voting, and while there's clearly room to whine about what's excluded (no "Two Lips Two Lungs One Tongue?" for shame!), there's no arguing that what's here is an excellent representation of the amazing variety of sonic madness conjured by Nomeansno over the past 25 years. From the full-tilt punk rock assault of classics like "Sex Mad" and "Dad," to more complex, intricate and equally classic songs like "The River" and "Give Me The Push," this is a band so skilled that they seem capable of doing whatever they want with their instruments, always challenging themselves as well as their audience. It's not for everyone, as evidenced by

the disc's hilarious cover photo of some bathroom graffiti, which reads, "How fucken [sic] old are Nomeansno? Give it up grand dads." For those of us who love Nomeansno, and there are many, we're hoping for another 25 years. For anyone who isn't familiar with Nomeansno and thus has no opinion either way, *The People's Choice* is a great starting point. (JC)

AntAcidAudio, PO Box 1778, Orinda, CA 94563

Normanoak – Born A Black Diamond, CD

This is the folksy approach of indie rock done right. It's not the singer-songwriter craze has taken the masses by storm, but a more moody and, at times, upbeat, almost Modest Mouse type of approach. Top quality for this style of music. (DM)

Secretly Canadian, 1499 West Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403, www.secretlycanadian.com

North Lincoln – S/T, 7"

North Lincoln delivers some gritty vocals and emotional guitar playing in these four tunes—sorta like straight-from-the-heart type punk rock and early Jawbreaker. (BC)

The Support Group, 2640 Trenton SW, Wyoming, MI 49509, www.thesupportgroup.cjb.net

Noxagt – The Iron Point, CD

Can metal exist without a single six-stringed guitar? The thundering art metal sludge of Noxagt provides this seeming contradiction. Drums, bass and viola are the instruments of choice. It's reminiscent of the Melvins minus guitar and vocals, but with a string section run through a distortion pedal. (RR)
Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

O'Doyle Rules – No Place Else To Go, CD

The goofy cover on this one made me think this was going to be some joke band, but O'Doyle Rules plays catchy, midtempo pop punk. There are nice melodies and even some "oooh oooh" vocal parts. Well-recorded for a self-released record with decent songs, but nothing new. (KM)

Self-released, www.stoplookingatmeswan.com

Oakley Hall – S/T, CD

Alt-country infused with a bit of psychedelia, Oakley Hall is a fledgling eight-piece including Papa Czazee of Oneida. This is an album with excellent flow, and the rusty male-female vocal harmonies add to the charm of the pure banjo-and-fiddle melodies. It's a beautiful album and a good summer porch-sittin' soundtrack. (LW)

Bulb Records, 4609 Hunt Rd., Adrian, MI 49221, www.bulbrecords.com

Observers, The – Lead Piii, 7"

I've said this a lot lately, but it's totally refreshing to hear young punk bands playing noncommercial, straight-ahead, old-school punk rock. Maybe they sound like a million other bands from yesteryear, but who cares, they rock! (BC)

Super Secret Records, PO Box 1585, Austin, TX 78767, www.supersecretrecords.com

☞ Obsoletes – Is This Progress?, CD

Have you ever noticed that when you really love a band, you wind up loving bands who sound exactly like them? Well, it should be known that I absolutely adore The Replacements, and it's quite clear that the three members of Obsoletes share my fervor for everyone's favorite lovable losers. Hell, Obsoletes like them so much they even cover one of their B-sides entitled "PO Box." As much as I should lecture on about how shame-

Reviewer Spotlight: Ari Joffe (AJ)

The Gun Club, Fire Of Love. The idea that rock 'n' roll is the devil's music is not entirely a product of the moral panic set off by '50s bible-beaters. No doubt those folks' concerns had more to do with an intense fear of "race mixing" and sexual promiscuity, which they perceived as being the inevitable result of white kids shakin' it up to Chuck Berry. But the fact remains that the influence of the blues on rock 'n' roll links the latter directly to the rhythms and melodies of the African folk magic tradition known in the southern United States as Hoodoo. Forget that bullshit you see depicted in b-horror movies. Santeria, Voodoo, Obeah—it's all derived from practices of African tribes like the Fon and the Yoruba synthesized with various forms of Christianity. Many blues musicians in the South were Hoodoo initiates. The influence it had on their playing and lyrical content is plainly apparent, if you know what to look for. Your average Christian white folk viewed this system of belief as either benign darky foolishness or malevolent, anti-Christian black magic. The sonic representation of these beliefs was considered "Devil music." What does this have to do with The Gun Club's 1981 debut, *Fire Of Love*? Everything. Jeffrey Lee Pierce, the band's vocalist, guitarist and songwriter, threw his punk-rock spirit into a river of electric blues. Scathing, distorted slide guitar and field-holler vocals meshed with climactic shifts in dynamic texture and bombastic drums to tap into the hypnotic, trance-inducing pulse of Hoodoo. Believe.

For more info: Check out the documentary film *Divine Horsemen* by Maya Deren and the books *The Bluesman* by Julio Finn and *Santeria: The Religion* by Migene Gonzalez-Wippler.

ful such obvious influence can be, it should be stated that even a second rate Replacements record is better than 75 percent of what is currently being released. If *Is This Progress* is a sign of things to come in the punk world, then I say Amen, Westerbergs of the world, unite! (MS)
145 Records, www.145records.com

OCS - 2, CD

John Dwyer (Coachwhips) carefully builds hypnotic soundscapes with a repetitive, acoustic strumming rooted in primitive, dark country music. He adds the echo of strange static sound effects that are equal parts train rumble and wind whistle to occupy the blank canvas space. The effect is mesmerizing. (CC)

Namack, 381 Broadway, Fourth Floor, Room 3, New York, NY 10013, www.namackrecords.com

Oh, Beast! - Makin' It In The Scene, CDEP

I can't say I wasn't amused by Oh, Beast!'s creative use of animal noises. On "Setting The Scene," metal-based drums and guitars are the background for dueling manmade sheep calls. Alongside the oddity of "bahs" and "oohs" is the story of a woman and an alligator getting down on "W.W.A.F.M.D?" for what purpose but to "get down" I'm not sure. All the songs on this EP of uncategorizable experimentation are sinister-sounding and at the same time completely ridiculous. Once you embrace the absurdity and stop looking for any semblance of sense, this EP can be a lot of fun. (AJA)

Perverted Son Records, PO Box 49290, Austin, TX 78765

Old Devil Moon - Midnight And Bright, CD

Oh! The obligatory melodic side project from a metalcore band that "ventures towards non abrasive sounds while retaining [other band's] musical complexity." That means it's contrived college rock made for Morns. This Suicide Note project is yawn-inspiring, but it strays from the pack with occasional bar-rock blues. (VC)

Hawthorne Street, PO Box 805353, Chicago, IL 60680, www.hawthornestreetrecords.com

100 Demons - S/T, CD

What the fuck is wrong with some people? Here they are, getting me all excited to listen to them because of their really cool choice of Japanese-print-style album art, then they turn out to be another Hatebreed knockoff. Here's a bunch of angry, seemingly overweight, middle-aged men singing about hating and fighting. I am glad I currently live on the West Coast for two reasons. One, there are almost no fans of this shit out here, and two, these guys can't come and kick my ass as easily when I say they suck. (TK)

Deathwish, 35 Congress St., Ste. 306, Salem, MA 01970-5567, www.deathwishinc.com

Onlinedrawing - The Volunteers, CD

Jonah Matranga's follow-up to 2002's *Visitors* mines familiar territory: subdued, mostly acoustic singer-songwriter material with nice production and added sonic elements and instruments. Emo-haters usually lump Oneline in with Dashboard Confessional, and while that's somewhat understandable, Matranga (thankfully) avoids lamenting ex-girlfriends *ad nauseum*. The record's diversity sound-wise makes it hard to write off as one-dimensional mope-core. The rock in "We Had A Deal" is reminiscent New End Original and Far (Matranga's short-lived rock outfits) and provides a nice break from the acoustic tracks. That said, Matranga has always been prone to cheesy turns of phrase. Check "Livin' Small," a reflection on the mass-marketing of punk rock: "All these punk rock pimps and hoes/sellin' this

and sellin' those/ sodas, cars and phones/ I mean, what's the dilly, yo?" Oh man, that's bad. There are copious liner notes detailing how the album recorded, and the CD has enhanced content featuring MP3 demo versions of some of the album's tracks. As writer Trevor Kelley said in *Punk Planet* a few issues back, Oneline tends to cheese you out and draw you in simultaneously. *The Volunteers* is more proof of that: good yet flawed, excessive yet engaging. (KR)

Jade Tree Records, 22310 Kennwynn Road, Wilmington DE 19810, www.jadetreec.com

Oppressed Logic - Ones That Control, CD

Straight-forward, beer-soaked punk for the kids with spiked jean jackets with a whole bunch of random band patches on them. The lyrics don't stray far from cliché, and the music is just your average, pissed off, fast-paced punk, but the occasional double bass drumming was pretty cool and unexpected. (KM)

Blazing Guns Records, PO Box 40236, Downey, CA 90029, www.blazinggunsrecords.com

Orange Island - S/T, CD

Pained emo vocals surf a wave of meaty, multilayered hard rock that is pretty standard, but notable for some interesting break-downs heavy on the stoppin' and the startin'. The morbid lyrics are underscored by some impressive art and design work on the record packaging. (DAL)

Triple Crown Records, 331 West 57th St., NY, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

Organz - The Cuts, CDEP

Art-damaged hardcore gets even more damaged courtesy of three thunderbrooms. All three bass guitarists rumble, churn and thrash under and over hoarse-throated shouts and slinky drumming. It's a low-end cluster fuck (a good thing). (RR)

Under Radar, PO Box 1641, Sealord, NY 11783, www.underadar.com

Outlie - Companions To Devils And Saints, CD

Generic, rockin' pop-punk that is about as radio-friendly as it gets. There's nothing outstanding or memorable about this release, despite a few cool guitar lines here and there. (KM)

Porterhouse, PO Box 3597, Hollywood, CA 90078, www.porterhouserecords.com

Output - We're All Wired, CDEP

Output's synth-punk style is undeniably retro-electro, and that's pretty irresistible, but inherently carries two flaws: It does very little that's new (unless you count making the punk clash harder into the electro) and takes itself too seriously. That's not to say that its raspy/romantic tone didn't have me bedroom dancing. (CC)

Cube Recordings, 561 Windsor St., Suite A-308, Somerville, MA 02143, www.xmixprod.com

Oval-Teen - Yorkville II, 2xCD

A delicious and ambitious two-disc 54-song collection of this Midwestern indie-pop favorites' early and unreleased material. You'll find a smattering of perfected pop tracks, with influences rooted deeply in Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* era harmonics, Elephant 6 whimsicality and '60s garage pop edge. (MG)

Bi-Fi Records, PO Box 1327, Ames, IA 50014, www.bifirecords.com

Owen - The EP, CDEP

Introspective singer-songwriter pop-rock from the former Owls, Cap'n Jazz and Joan Of Arc member Mike Kinsella. There is depth to both the writing and the melodies, which make this a great prelude to the upcoming

ing full-length. If there were any justice, you'd be hearing "Breaking Away" on the radio. (BN)

Polyvinyl Records, PO Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140, www.polyvinylrecords.com

Paint The Town Red / Rise and Fall - Weapons, split CDEP

Why anyone would release a four-song split that clocks in at under 8 minutes on CD is beyond my comprehension. All four songs (two from each band) are pretty standard, East Coast-style hardcore, complete with mosh breakdowns and plenty opportunities to chant along. Not horrible, but not good. (TK)

Join the Team Player, Altoettingerstr. 6a, 81673 Muenchen, Germany, www.jointheteamplayer.com

Pale Riders - Trade Your Guns For A Coffin, CD

Good bit. That "bit" being surf guitar plus hardcore plus gunfighter-themed lyrics. It's like Ennio Morricone as interpreted by punkers. The only weak link is the tuneless singing that's way too high in the mix. (RR)

Single Army Action Records / self-released, www.paleriders.net

Paper Chase, The - God Bless Your Black Heart, CD

Back on the prowl with unique brand of spastic art-punk, The Paper Chase has done it once again. In addition to their traditionally jagged rhythms and discordant leads, the band slyly incorporates pop sensibility on *God Bless Your Black Heart*, making the record their most accessible to date. Listening to the maddening conniptions of these Dallas-based lads brings about a sense of severe uneasiness, yet the discomfort is addictive, keeping ears and minds hooked at all times. Singer John Congleton's manic gift can be a bit overbearing at points, but his spiteful intellect and convincing delivery easily justify any temporary annoyances. Hitch hiker thumbs! (BM)

Kill Rock Stars, PMB 418, 120 NE State Ave., Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Paragraph, The - S/T, CD

The Paragraph mixes the not-quite-emo of Samiam and the not-quite-punk of Gang Of Four. More melodic than post-punk, but more exciting than indie. Choppy, dueling guitar melodies, a tight rhythm section and strong vocals with a hint of an English accent and the occasional effect thrown in. A good, although brief, start. (NS)

Cosmonaut Records, 99 Main St., Nyack, NY 10960, www.cosmonautrecords.com

Paranoids - The Party's Over, CDEP

Sure they look like a buncha douche bags on their CD—their ascot-wearin' lead singer splayed out like a wounded mermaid, all of them looking sharp and dejected. Then you pop in the record, and all of a sudden you're on your feet, dancing the jig and completely forgetting that you once harbored any ill will toward the Paranoids based on first photographic impressions. Halfway through this five-song CD you stop for a second when *deja vu* smacks you in the face, "These guys sound like...The Librarians!" That's because two-thirds of them used to be in the defunct band, and they have brought the same '60s pop, fun rock 'n' roll sound to this group. Who can blame 'em? (AA)

Pandacide Records, PO Box 2774, Petaluma, CA 94952, www.pandaciderecords.com

Passport Again, The - Hold On To The Memories, CDEP

Slow and mellow indie pop from Memphis. This record is all right in an all-country, laid back kind of way. (JG)

Makeshift Records / self-released, 508 N. Maple, Apt. B, Murfreesboro, TN 37130

Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

White Flag, Wild Kingdom. While trolling through my first Portland record swap, I came across this record in pretty great condition for \$6. White Flag was a really diverse band, going through a ton of line-up changes and a few different musical phases. This album was recorded after singer Al-Bum left the band, and former drummer Pick Z. Stix played guitar and sang. Pat Fear wrote most of the songs, minus the four covers. They began as a big "fuck you" to an overly strict punk and hardcore scene in '82, and there are some great songs on here. Some of them sound like *Tim*-era Replacements, some sound like early Red Cross, and most of them have an awesome Cheap Trick influence. (The second track is actually a cover of "He's A Whore," and it's better than the original, if that's possible.) *Wild Kingdom* isn't without its flaws, like some of the annoying song intros and this goddamn doo-wop song that sounds like The Chimpunks. Right after leaving me cringing about that song, they burst into "Demolition Girl" by the Saints, that they just perfect. Among the other covers are "I'm Down" by the Beatles, "Hot Rails to Hell" by Blue Oyster Cult, and "Deuce" by Kiss. I am sure, since the early White Flag is being re-released, that this will eventually be as well. Until then, check your local record swaps, or shell out \$40 on gemm.com. It would still be worth it to have this record.

Other cool records I found at the record swap: Hüsker Dü, *Metal Circus*; Ramones, *Rocket To Russia*; The Meatmen, *Crippled Children Suck*; Didijs, *Hey Judester*. A few days afterward, I picked up the fucking amazing Four Eyes CD *Rock And Role Playing*, which every self-respecting geek should be listening to.



Pattern Is Movement – The (Im)possibility Of Longing, CD

Andrew Thiboldeaux's vocals carry more muscle in their dashing comfort than they ever could in a threatening capacity, making him the equivalent of a Homeric Siren, only male. Chimes, piano jottings and gentle guitar give these delicate character sketches room to breathe. (SM)
Self-released, www.patternismovement.com

Phonocaptors, The – Call It What You Want, CD

I love bands like this because you know they had big record collections and didn't get much action in high school (like *Punk Planet* editor Dan S.). The Phonocaptors draw influences from the best punk, rock, glam and garage bands from the '70s through the '90s. And they make it all so fun to listen to: loud, in-your-face guitar riffs, pounding drums, groovy bass lines and an energetic singer with a sexy voice. Rock was supposed to be sexual and dirty, and songs like "Kiss My Lips" and "Fool Around" let you get a little nasty. There is a reason this band was voted the best new band in St. Louis a few years ago. Remember a time where David Bowie was cool, and bands like The Stooges and New York Dolls heated up the punk scene? If you don't, get this to hear what it must have sounded like. (BC)

Pro-Vel Records, PO Box 5182, St. Louis, MO 63139, www.provelrecords.com

Phosphorescent – The Weight Of Flight, CD

I liked the last record, *A Hundred Times Or More*, because it was dark and moody. This starts off moody, but turns into a church-revival record with the help of an organ and piano. A highlight includes a very good cover of Willie Nelson's "My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys." (DI)

Warm Recording, PO Box 143 Athens GA 30603, www.thewarmssupercomputer.com

Piano Drag – Possessions And Positions, CD

Piano Drag's artsy post-punk combines the ever-popular electronic component with standard-issue band equipment and the usual off-killer yelp. It's nothing I haven't heard before, but they do add some nice details, such as the overlapping vocals on "Jeweler's Balance" and the soaring instrumentation of "Sweetest Song." (AJA)

One Cell Records, PO Box 5332, Fullerton, CA 92838, www.onecellrecords.com

Pieces, The – S/T, CD

Polished and well-constructed, The Pieces play accessible, radio-friendly pop that crosses over into the singer-songwriter domain. Their mostly midtempo, amiable melodies and fluid vocals are reliable, and the songs have a touch of unconventionality about them, saving them from all-out pop conformity. (AJA)

Benchmark Records, Suite 201, 6311 E. Westfield Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46220, www.benchmarkrecords.com

Pink Mountaintops, The – S/T, CDEP

One of the great questions could be whether the Pink Mountaintop himself, Stephen McBean, gets so much tail—in a shitload of miraculous ways—that he has nothing else to draw upon for lyrical influence, or maybe he gets nothing but self-duty from the waist-down, giving him a desire to make the wettest of dances his sole means of lyrical inspiration. His musical horniness is sickly beautiful. With no idea of McBean's age, he sounds closer to middle age than you'd like your sex-crazed singers to be. If that's true, it's the same as if every second or third word out of James Taylor or Neil Young's mouth was "pussy" or "boner." He's much classier about it all, but the overriding feel of the Ozark-rocky record is that sex better be on the way, or the day is ruined. (SM)

Jagjaguwar, 1499 W. Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403, www.jagjaguwar.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Laidman (DAL)

Sleater-Kinney, Call The Doctor. Over the years, I have tried to avoid picking records by bands that are still around, but when I saw Sleater-Kinney in concert this May, my resolve crumbled to bits. I really think they are now in a rare class of bands (SK and Fugazi and I don't know who else) who have managed to become a pop-culture force while perfectly maintaining the integrity and values of the underground, and the artistic quality of their early days. Eventually all the SK records will be here in the classics section, I'm sure, but let's start with *Call The Doctor* because it was the album when their sound really took shape. The lucid, poetic insights into alienation, conformity, sexism and other complicated themes are delivered through songs with fittingly complex structures. Take the title track with its rising tension or "Taste Test" with its nightmarish sonic and verbal images. It's not just soundtrack material; these are self-contained epics. And "Good Things" still breaks my heart after all these years.

Lots of PP review material is still hanging around my stereo: The Warmers; *To The Bitter End* comp; new Urinals and Just a Fire; as well as the new Morrissey and Modest Mouse records.

Pirx The Pilot – Famous In 47 States, CD

This San Francisco three-piece is making what X started their own. The deadpan male-female vocals and campy bass lines remind me a bit of the early B-52's. The album is packed with ironic numbers with names such as "Dance Dance Revolution" (the perfect anti-scene song), "Cult Of Jogging" and "Fat American." (LW)

New Disorder Records, 115 Bartlett St., San Francisco, CA 94110

Plasmodium – Clairaudience, CD

Check the ex-members: Bio Ritmo, Pan American, Squirrel Nut Zippers and...GWAR! This concept record of a duo doing "paranormal music" seems more like a bad jazz/ambient fusion with "evil" crooning. If this is supposed to be out of this world, I'd take my chances with our rotting planet. (VC)

Dry County Records, PO Box 15491, Richmond, VA 23226, www.drycounty.net

Please Mr. Gravedigger – Here's To The Life Of The Party, CD

Plain, straight-forward rock with moody keyboards is the best way to describe this one. The vocals scream more than the sing, and PMG reminds me of a less moody Murder City Devils. It's actually pretty good and dancey. I just wish they'd vary their songs more (or at least the drumming). (EH)

Pluto Records, www.plutorecords.com

Plot To Blow Up The Eiffel Tower, The – If You Cut Us We Bleed, CDEP

San Diego jazz-punk outfit follow up their debut LP with this EP containing three artful eruptions of guitars that sound like they're fighting, frantic bass-playing and drumming, yelps and screams and eerie chanting, and even saxophones. (DAL)

HCNL Records, PO Box 36997, Indianapolis, IN 46236, www.hcnl.com

Pointing Finger – Best Bruises Collection, CD

If only you could have seen the huge smile on my face when I found this in my review box. This is the pick of this issue's litter. Pointing Finger are one of the best straightedge/ youth crew bands around today. I can picture all the finger pointing and dogpiles in my head. There are gang vocals aplenty. Their sound has a heavy Better Than A Thousand influence, but that's OK, because BTAT were a pretty great and underrated band. Contained on this CD are all of PF's 7-inches. A spectacular version of Gorilla Biscuits' "High Hopes" closes the disc. Pointing Finger stands head and shoulders above pretty much every other youth-crew band of today. This is going to be considered a classic of its genre 20 years from now. What else can I say to convince you that you need this? (DA)

Still Holding On Records, 65 Au Long Pre, 4053 Embourg, Belgium, <http://stillholdingon.free.fr>

Prosaics – Aghast Agape, CD

I didn't really like this CD, which seems to have been passed up by the newest wave of NYC bands. It begins with this retro '80s New Order/Joy Division minor-tuning song and goes downhill from there. It was produced by somebody in the New England music scene and was mixed by somebody even cooler in the English '80s retro scene. Where do New York bands pick up the fake English accents? This album was recorded awhile ago and probably wasn't picked up by whoever paid for the studio time. Now the band is trying to put it out themselves. I'll take the Yeah Yeah Yeahs or The Killers any day. (DI)

Self-released, www.prosaics.com

Psyopus – Ideas Of Reference, CD

Psyopus' biggest appeal is also their worst enemy, unfortunately. The most technical "metal" record I've heard to date, the songs blast right along but

Pattern Is Movement / Read Yellow

without any more straight-forward parts to tie all of the wankery together. It's a head trip, that's for sure, but just too scatterbrained to fully enjoy. (DH)
Blackmarket Activities, 23 Rand St., Revere, MA 02151, www.blackmarketactivities.com

Puppyhertz – Animal Squad, CD

Say you're playing Mario Kart, and Nintendo's semi-sophisticated bleeps and bleeps aren't doin' it for you. That's when you pop in these kick-back groove beats. It's a mix of hip-hop production and electronic mechanicals, working together to massage your bootay-shakin' button. (AA)

Monumental Records, 160 Conejo Rd., Santa Barbara, CA 93103, www.monu.net

Quiet After Nine – Arrangements, CD

They negotiate the fine line between lulling and dull with a collection of low-key indie-pop tunes that, despite some stabs at pep, come across as kind of lackadaisical. (DAL)

Self-released, www.quietafternine.com

Race, The – If You Can, CD

The Race's new full-length builds on their slow, minimalist, electronic-based rock. The guitars flutter, and the drums are lightly played, giving the songs this sort of grounded release. Aware of their genre's limits, they keep the album to nine songs, delivering not too much and not too little. (AJA)

Flameshovel Records, 1658 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, IL 60647, www.flameshovel.com

Radiant Republic Of Texas – Golden Gate Mistake, CDEP

Rough and raw chugging guitars in the post-punk vein and a steady drum-beat back up the nasally vocals of Brian Pennington, a.k.a. Pentagram. These songs are (loosely) based on a recurring nightmare about mass suicide and the Golden Gate Bridge. Very nice indeed. (MP)

SRS Recordings, PO Box 3693, Englewood, CO 80155-3693, srsrecordings@yahoo.com

Raise The Red Lantern – S/T, CD

How the fuck do you describe this stuff? Post-hardcore with a bad attitude. The slightest hint of melody keeps 'em in line, but the screaming and overall intensity make me want to do something bad. Nice and aggressive, but not macho. Good stuff. (DH)

Failed Experiment, 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago, IL 60609, www.failedexperimentrecords.com

Raking Bombs – You Are The Resilazjiax, Unlike 01100110, CD

The vocalist is an At The Drive-In soundalike, but the music is a more chaotic brand of noise brouhahas. What really distinguishes them from other explosive math-rock groups is the eerie, atmospheric interludes and even a hint of funkiness in one instrumental number. (DAL)

Self-released, www.therakingbombs.cjb.net

Ray, Harold – Live In Concert, CD

Don't get your horn-rimmed glasses busted up when you shake your gams at the sock hop to these high-octane oldies covered with much panache by this Bay Area outfit. Their pristine faux soul comes across pretty well on record, even though the lo-fi live recording sucks away some of the oomph. (DAL)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

Read Yellow – Radios Burn Faster, CD

Read Yellow is to today's underground rock scene as the Pixies were to the explosion of the college-rock scene. Now, in no way am I comparing the two (no band can share the Pixies pedestal), but all I'm wondering is why this band isn't huge in the indie world yet. (MG)

Ferway Recordings, PO Box 15614, Kenmore Station, Boston, MA 02215, www.ferwayrecordings.com

Reigning Sound – Too Much Guitar!, CD

To top 2002's soul-rattling *Time Bomb High School* is like asking Robert Downey, Jr. to stay off [insert favorite drug here], but Memphis' musically diverse Reigning Sound prove that, like good Tennessee whiskey, things get better with age. On the aptly titled *Too Much Guitar!*, veteran frontman Greg Cartwright (The Oblivians and Compulsive Gamblers) drives with a gas pedal that knows no floor. Their R&B-flavored honky-tonk rock is played at such blistering reckless abandon, you wonder what kind of industrial-strength chicken wire is holding this band together. Do not roller skate to this. The moody, boozin' ballads still stay ("Funny Thing"), but the record leans heavy on hellbound rock (the rest of the album), including a cover of Hank Ballard's raunchy "Get It." With the vocals traditionally mixed low, it sounds like the Marshall stacks are inches from your head—at least on the volume I'm blasting this at. (VC)

In the Red, PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90050, www.intheredrecords.com

Reputation, The – To Force A Fate, CD

Despite its better moments, I felt ambivalent about The Reputation's 2002 debut, and I feel the same way now. The standout track is easily "Face It," an unbelievably catchy song that blends pop-punk and indie-rock styles seamlessly, with a chorus that sticks in your head for days. Singer Elizabeth Elmore has an excellent voice and is once again on her game lyrically, though this record lacks its predecessor's strong sexual undercurrent. But like its predecessor, it slows down significantly at the halfway point. Despite an energetic eighth track, the rest of the record is a subdued affair. Track five, "The Lasting Effects," really sounds like The Sundays. Other tracks feature acoustic guitars and lots of piano and keyboards. The songs are arranged and produced well—and are radio-friendly—and I wonder if they're a sign of things to come, even though the slower songs lack the charm of the bouncier tracks. I said this last time, and I'll say it again: The Rep are the most engaging when their songs have energy. Opener "Let This Rest" is infectious, and track two, "Bottle Rocket Battles," has some excellent rock-guitar theatrics. Despite these moments of greatness, *To Force A Fate* is ultimately disappointing. (KR)

Lookout Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Residuals, The – Atom Bomb, 7"

Fast and furious, '80s-sounding hardcore like it was meant to be done. No wasted space and on blood red vinyl to boot. (JJG)

Pair O Doc's Records, PO Box 222059 Dallas, TX 75222

Rhythm Of Black Lines – Human Hand, Animal Band, CD

This epic album instantly intrigued me. Using unconventional instruments (cello, violin, piano), ROBL writes beautiful compositions that also rock. It seems like every instrument is on its own plane, but it all comes together. This phenomenal record is spacey, pretty rock with unusual twists and a lot of instruments. (EH)

GSL, PO Box 65091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.goldstandardlabs.com

Robot Has Werewolf Hand – The "Endless" LP, CD

If you're going to play ultra-fast howling hardcore, you may as well have a goofy name and scream any old clumsy, nonmusical lyrics, right? Check. (RR)

Art of the Underground, artoftheunderground@hotmail.com

Romweber, Dexter – Blues That Defy My Soul, CD

Blues-drenched whiskey rock from ex-member of Flat Duo Jets. Romweber has a gravelly yelp, reminiscent of Screamin' Jay Hawkins, which isn't

all that appealing, but I guess it works. There's an awesome cover of Charlie Rich's "I've Lost My Heart To You." Perfect for the pompadour, toothpick-in-yer-mug crowd, Daddy-O. (AJ)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Ruffians, The – Live At CBGB, CD

A Pogues revival band caught live at Hilly Kristal's place. The Ruffians are proficient, but do not expand on the precedent McGowan set two decades ago. Fans of Paddy rock will likely overlook this, but casual fans will not. It's up to you to decide which side of the fence you stand on. (RL)

Mugsy Records, PO Box 981, New York, NY 10009, www.mugsyrecords.com

S Prcss – Taste Like Daughter, CDEP

A surprisingly stripped-down and minimal batch of songs from the band that was being hailed as dance-pop masters by music snob monolith *Pitchfork* as recently as last year. Now we have a gentle, soaring, sad and urgent collection of pop songs, and it still sounds great. (MG)

My Pal God Records, 47 Hardy Dr., Princeton, NJ 08540, www.mypalgodrecords.com

Sad Riders, The – Lay Your Head On The Soft Rock, CD

Hide the razor blades! Dang, is this stuff sad: soft alt-country that gives new meaning to the word "depressing." Somebody give these dudes a hug and a brand new puppy or something. There's a fine line between making music that's realistically plaintive about the sorrows of life and playing just plain old depressing shit. I mean, take almost any tune by Hank Williams, for example. The appeal of Hank's songs is that they provide you with a sense of comfort. Comfort in knowing you aren't the only one that's ever been down, that's ever been lonely, that's ever been fed up. It's life-affirming in that way. It's like getting a TB test where they'll shoot a little of the virus into you so you'll build up a natural immunity. Listening to The Sad Riders would be tantamount to the doctor tossing you into an ocean full of tuberculosis. (AJ)

Doghouse America, PO Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623, www.doghousearecords.com

Saeta – We Are Waiting All For Hope, CD

Switching between Oberst-like confessionals and WB series-inspired ballads, Saeta could very well be charged with having their heart permanently stapled onto their sleeve. A little too dreary and sappy, this whole record is just a bit much. The lackluster Smiths cover didn't help matters. (MS)

Fish the Cat Productions / self-released, www.saetaamusic.com

St. Thomas – Let's Grow Together, CD

St. Thomas knows how to put a smile on your face by playing warm pop music tinged in Scandinavian folk and modern alt-country. Yep, an eclectic combination if there ever was one, but it works, and by the end you're happily humming along.

Racing Junior, Brugata 3a, 0189 Oslo, Norway, www.racingjunior.com

Safes, The – Family Jewels, CD

Fun rock 'n' roll with some interesting instruments thrown in (vibes, sax) every once in awhile. Perfect for those nights when the DJ at the sock-hop just isn't pulling his weight. (DH)

Failed Experiment, 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago, IL 60609, www.failedexperimentrecords.com

Salvatore – Tempo, CD

Salvatore are just making their way into the States for recognition after winning the Norwegian Electronic Grammy and top 15 Album of the Year in 2002 in their native land. This album will probably do the same for them,

with their combination of live and electronic collage of sleepy-time dub-rock. Mellow, uplifting and moving at the same time, *Tempo* is quite an experience if you dig ambient sounds à la Tortoise (John McEntrie assisted with production on *Tempo*) or even Germany's spacey Notwist. But Salvatore are blazing their own trail, and they definitely have their shit together. This isn't a driving album, nor will it get in your face, but it's beautiful music that will leave its mark. This is worth a listen and then some. (DM)

Racing Junior, Brugata 3a 0186 Oslo, Norway, www.racingjunior.com

Sartain, Dan – Dan Sartain Vs. The Serpientes, CD

If the statement from the Swami himself that accompanied this record is to be believed, and believe me I don't believe much, then Dan Sartain is a man-child with a guitar from Birmingham who may or may not be a fourth generation coal miner (or he may just channel the soul of a fourth generation coal miner). Whoever this man of mystery turns out to be, he can play a mean garage-rock tune. The spare arrangements create the perfect mood, and his vocals are confident and believable in both the jaunty rockers and the menacing imitation-Johnny-Cash ballads. He sings about haunting loneliness, but also about being bitten by a jellyfish. And, of course, the open road. This album includes four-track recordings taken from his self-released debut album, as well as studio tracks featuring mainstays of the San Diego scene. (DAL)

Swami Records, PO Box 620428, San Diego, CA 92162, www.swamirecords.com

Satanarchy – Disgraceful World, CD

I really wanted to hate this because of its ridiculous name, but it is actually good. Their sound is equal parts Discharge and Slayer, with some hard rock mixed in. Get this if you like your music dark and rocking. (DA)

Primitive Art, PO Box 143, SE-301 04 Halmstad, Sweden, www.primitiveartrecords.com

Sawwheel, The / Milkcrate Rustlers, The – split, 7"

The Sawwheel's contribute "Country Lines," an OK quick-tempo folk tune. The Milkcrate Rustlers cover an old bluegrass tune from the '20s called "Hogeye." Skip this and go buy anything by John Prine. (AJ)

Hillbilly Stew Records, PO Box 82625, San Diego, CA 92138, www.hillbillystew.com

Scatterbox – Infection III, CD

Scatterbox sounds just like its members' old band, Moral Crux. *Infection III* is pop-punk with a dash of thrash, old-school in both its delivery and standard themes (i.e. SoCal, drinking, blue-collar life). It's done simply but done well. I would have loved this album in ninth grade. (LW)

Blackhouse Records, 422 E. Reid Ave., Couer d'Alene, ID 83814, stressfactor@hotmail.com

Schooner – You Forgot About Your Heart, CD

Picture Jonathan Richman in *There's Something About Mary* after listening to his Smiths 12" records for two days straight while living in the southern U.S. It's not bad at all; these guys work its catchiness, but it takes a few listens to get it. (DM)

Pox World Empire, 1512 James St., Durham, NC 27707, www.poxworldempire.com

Searcy, Peter – Couch Songs, CD

What I found impressive about this CD was the fact that Peter Searcy played piano, mandolin, cello, percussion and guitar in it. He's definitely a talented musician. Apparently his song "Losing Light Fast" got airplay on MTV before his old label died. There's a new version here, and it sounds vaguely familiar. I can understand how it would have gotten airplay, because it's a good song and sticks out as "the single." The songs are of the mellow,

Reviewer Spotlight: Ryan Leach (RL)

Radio Birdman, The Essential (1974-1978). Yes! Radio Birdman wrote some of the best songs of the mid/late '70s. I put their guitarist and main songwriter, Deniz Tek, in the same league as Chuck Berry, Joe Strummer and Paul Westerberg. They are (at least in my mind) the best "punk" band to come out of Australia (and yes, that includes The Saints). Radio Birdman was a bit of an anomaly in the sense that were both proto-punk and punk; the band bridged the mid-'70s gap with both hard rockers and Ramones-driven, amphetamine surf rock. There are no snags in their catalogue 'cause the band stayed true to what they loved: *Hawaii Five-O*, Eskimo Pies and fast cars. There is no faking here—no overzealous, pseudo-intellectual lyrics about saving the world or giving peace a chance. Birdman was on a search-and-destroy mission. The band not only rocked hard, but they looked cool as hell: rocking aviator glasses, Rickenbackers and white Epiphone guitars. It didn't hurt that this six-piece looked more like a gang than a band. In the end, problems with Sire Records put the brakes on this MC5-inspired mob. Sub Pop had the grace and good sense to release a thorough, easy-to-obtain collection of Birdman's career. Don't sleep on this one; it's ridiculously good.

Current audio shotgun blasts: The Riverboat Gamblers, *Something To Crow About*; The Von Bondies, *Pawn Shoppe Heart*; The Legendary Story of Sun Records, *Disc One*; Elliott Smith, *Either/Or*; Link Wray/Bunker Hill, *Friday Night Dance Party 7"*.



folksy variety, making this album pretty enjoyable. Peter Searcy can craft some catchy tunes. My only complaint is that the album is too radio-friendly. Any single one of these songs could end up on the radio. (DA)
Initial Records, PO Box 1731, Louisville, KY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Sharp Ease, The / Hot N Heavy – split, 7"

This is one lopsided record. The Sharp Ease play new wave with bite. Singer Paloma Parfrey's vocals slink and undulate along with the band's sinister-yet-dancey, Manchester-in-'81 vibe. One song isn't enough. The Hot N Heavy side sounds like homemade karaoke demo tapes. (RR)
Spitshine Records, 410 S. Lincoln Blvd., #110, Venice, CA 90291, www.spitshinerecords.com

Shattered Angel – In The Arms Of A Ghost, CD

From Chicago with exquisite cover art, Shattered Angel is tight hardcore with heavy guitars, drums and vocals with elements that draw on metal. No less than the first three songs are about waking from terrible dreams. Others are about graves, darkness, roses, shadows, ghosts—things a goth-metal band would sing about, though with the confessional and touchy-feely quality of bad emo ("They say that destiny is foreordained/ still I can't help but feel this way/ so walk with me/ take me through my shadows/ and dance with me my love"). According to the website, they've already broken up. Damn. (BA)

Failed Experiment, PO Box A-3412, Chicago, IL 60690-3412, www.failedexperimentrecords.com

Short Happy Life, The – The Album Is Also Called "The Short Happy Life", CD

Jerry Fels is sort of awkward and nerdy; he feels things too deeply and wears his heart on his sleeve. But he's likeable and sincere, and he has no qualms about exposing his inner thoughts. His second solo full-length, the first released under the moniker The Short Happy Life, is a break-up album, but don't write it off. It's accessible, confessional lo-fi geek rock with strangely catchy melodies and endearing lyrics, sometimes delivered with such sincerity that it almost makes you uncomfortable. With its wavering vocals, constant keyboard and drum machine, an obvious comparison to Atom And His Package can be made, but The Short Happy Life brings something more. More life experience, hurt and heartbreak, combined with a tongue-in-cheek quality. Take Track 5, a song in which Jerry solemnly sings "We are just fucking ourselves" over and over until he eventually is backed by a ragtag choir of his own voice. Classic. Or, "At First It Will Be Hard," the most hopeful track, where Jerry put to words the contrary nature of relationships. "The ones who jump ship first get the fastest reward/ The ones who stick it out get something worth fighting for." So true. Jerry totally won me over. (LW)

Nobody's Favorite Records, c/o Jerry Fels, 14 Windsor Ave. #6, Somerville, MA 02144, www.nobodysfavoriteirecords.com

Siderunners, The – Ain't Inventin' The Wheel, CD

Twangy alt-country reminiscent of Uncle Tupelo. I don't really have anything to compare this to, so I'll just stick with the first sentence and leave it at that. Good to have just in case that bottle of whiskey starts a-callin'. (DH)

Failed Experiment Records, 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago, IL 60609, www.failedexperimentrecords.com

Silent Drive – Love Is Worth It, CD

Mixing spatial rock and angry punk may seem counterproductive, but Silent Drive pull it off rather well on *Love Is Worth It*, another step toward diversifying the Equal Vision roster. While it works better on some songs

("American Classic," "Broken Hearts Club") than others ("Rooftops," "Hen-pecked"), the good far outweighs the bad. I am always more keen about a record that goes beyond the usual boundaries instead of settling for the tired mainstream sound. If you're not scared off by the extensive experimentation, this record deserves your attention and should impress you based on ingenuity alone. (BN)

Equal Vision Records, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

Silent Treatment, The – After Ours, CDEP

Pretty standard, grunt-moaning, slow/poppy/sad emo bordering on hard rock, or gorpsemoorhock, as the kids are calling that particular subgenre these days. It is so earnest and pained, and there is even a piano. Some decent dramatic moments. (DAL)

Lucid Records Chicago, 665 Timber Hill Rd., Deerfield, IL 60015, www.lucidrecords.com

63 Crayons – Good People, CD

Remember when you were a kid, and you used to chop up crayons and sprinkle the bits between two pieces of wax paper before a supervising adult ironed it flat and melted the colored waxiness into some distorted psychedelic mess? Imagine if you could hear those colors infused with the mixed memories of childhood: the comfort and tenderness of wide-eyed wonderment and the sheer confusion about everything that surrounded you. Do you hear it? If so, you're probably listening to 63 Crayons. They might be a noisier, space-folk version of They Might Be Giants with a '70s aesthetic. Their whimsical melodies are pop awesome in standout tracks "Walking," "Mrs. Brewster" and "Popcorn." Tired of all your sad, sappy musical collection? Brighten shit up, color yourself a rainbow. (AA)

Happy Happy Birthday To Me Records, PO Box 1035, Panama, FL 32402, www.hbbtm.com

69 Charger – Trash Deluxe, CD

With a name like 69 Charger, you imagine fire, fury and a gas-sucking V8 that takes you from 0 to crazy in nothing flat. Sadly, 69 Charger don't deliver. Maybe it's singer's generic rock voice or the garage-rock-by-the-books songwriting. "Gran Torino" might be a better name for this band. (JIG)

Stardumb, PO Box 21145 3001, AC Rotterdam, The Netherlands, www.stardumbrecords.com

SK And The Punk Ass Bitches, The – True Saviors Of Rock N Roll, CD

Once you get past their unfortunate name, SK And The Punk Ass Bitches can somewhat throw it down. Diehard fans of AC/DC and The Lazy Cowgirls should like this band. However, don't even think of picking this one up before you own The Riverboat Gamblers' two LPs. (RL)

We Got Records, 7900 N. Washburne, Portland OR 97217, wegotrecords@hotmail.com

Slumlords – S/T, CD

Morons need bands to listen to. With their meathead lyrics, gang-vocal choruses and metal guitars without the solos, the Slumlords fit the bill perfectly. (RR)

Perfect Victim Records, PO Box 52084, Boston, MA 02205, www.perfectvictimrecords.com

Small Axe – Ride To The Bottom, CD

Vocals, drums, bass, a guitar, maybe two. If we want to get really adventurous, maybe a tambourine. How boring, right? Well Small Axe have returned with a record full of bizarre noises from god knows where slopped on top of a classic-rock-sounding base to create a psychedelic sonic stew. (DAL)

HoeX Records, www.hoex.com

Small Towns Burn A Little Slower – S/T, CDEP

Another cookie-cutter release with everything in the way of catchy hooks, sing-alongs and radio-friendly melodies, yet somehow devoid of any depth, originality or genuineness. Originality is a good thing to possess as a band, and despite being good musicians, these guys simply don't have it. (BN)
Rise Records, PO Box 135, Roseburg, OR 97470, www.riserecords.com

Smith, Graham – Final Battle, CD

Smith plays clever, lo-fi singer/songwriter songs that are often catchy yet often flat in the vocals department. Tracks two and three, "The Heat" and "Lots of Love & A Long, Long Ladder" are excellent: catchy and poppy with smartly written lyrics. The album nosedives after track four, as the vocals stumble, and the lo-fi edge just begins to sound amateur (in a bad way). Even if those flat vocals are Smith's shtick (which the onesheet hints at), they're still really dry. The beginning of "Let The Eagle Soar" (nice John Ashcroft reference) especially suffers from this; the song sounds like it was recorded on a four-track in a practice space—and not in a good way. With slightly better production and a little more self-editing, Smith could really come into his own. This could be a prelude to something great, but only time will tell. (KR)

March Records, 111 Westervelt, #1, St. George, NY 10301, www.marchrecords.com

Smith, Lindsay – Were You Prom Queen?, CD

Lindsay Smith calls her music "alternacheesefolk," and I couldn't agree more. It's folk music not exactly at its best, with lyrics that remind me of children's songs at times. The best way to describe it is choir-class vocals accompanied by mediocre folk music. Unimpressive. (EH)
Self-Released, PO Box 7004, Atlanta, GA 30357, www.lindsay-smith.com

Smut Peddlers – Coming Out, CD

Smut Peddlers return with another superlative full-length of first-rate beach punk. Hardcore fans will want both the LP and CD, because the CD is enhanced and contains a hilarious 25-minute documentary (some of which was created by a prepubescent boy) of them hanging out, recording and playing live. (AE)

TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St., #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

Snuff Project, The – Dyin' Ain't Much of a Livin', CD

Whoa! Yeah! C'mon! Those aren't the kind of lyrical substitutes you can throw into any old song. But when The Snuff Project does it, it works. With a bit of Hot Snakes dissonance, Murder City Devils swing/swagger and garage stomp and shuffle, whoas, yeahs and c'mons are all that's truly needed. (RR)

Hackshop, PO Box 21061, Washington, DC 20009, www.hackshoprecords.com

Soddmann Insein – War. On Drugs, 12"

Who can argue with lyrics like "Oh America, liberate the fuck outta me" and "I don't need your lies/ I just want some freedom fries/ Who's the country I hate the most/ Iraq you're fucking freedom toast." Great art. Great Concept. Hilarious execution. The artsy hardcore music is pretty rad, too. (TK)

Post Present Medlumi, PO Box 291301, Los Angeles, CA 90029, www.thesnell.org/ppm

Son Of The Velvet Rat – By My Side, CD

A great record of Leonard Cohen-esque, dark, moody folk-rock, this is precarious, slowly moving music accompanied by male and female vocals. It's emotional and well-written, though you'd have to be a fan of such melan-

Reviewer Spotlight: Krystle Miller (KM)

The Spirit Of Versailles, Discography. The Spirit Of Versailles really combines all my favorite elements of post-hardcore. They've got the whole raw, screamed vocals and tantrum-throwing thing going, but unlike a lot of bands, these guys sandwiched and incorporated beautiful melodies in between, and even within, all the blast beats, noise and distortion. One minute you're being bludgeoned with a wall of guitars and drumming, and the next they'll break into a quiet, introspective sound with off-key, sung vocals. The pretty parts are influenced by Midwest emo bands from the early to mid-'90s, as it has the characteristics of that "Midwest" sound, and it's done exceptionally well. The lyrics on the songs fall in the vague, personal-type category that you pretty much expect when listening to a band like this, but they don't come off too corny or taken from a high school journal, like some of the other bands in the genre. Although they were only around for a couple of years, the band managed to release quite a few records that (these days) are highly sought-after by nerdy, record-collecting kids, myself included. This handy 2xCD discography eliminates the need to hunt for and then pay \$15+ for these each of these records on eBay. Released by the super cool Init Records, this little gem is one of the more worthwhile discographies I own.

Somewhat recent playlist: Caught In The Fall, *Act IV*; Mates Of State, *Team Box*; This Ship Will Sink, *S/T*; Takaru, *There Can Be Only None*; Phoenix Bodies / Enkephalin, split LP.

choly music to truly appreciate its depth. Features a cover of "Love Will Tear Us Apart." (EH)

Starfish Records, 6144 Glen Tower St., Los Angeles, CA 90068, starfish6@earthlink.net

Sophomore Level Psychology – S/T, CDEP

Sophomore Level Psychology's debut EP is a mess of quivering guitar noise and horribly slow drumbeats. The band members seem to be at odds, with one camp going the pop route and the other side going God knows where. It's supposed to be pop-punk, — more like pop *junk* (I apologize). (AJA)
Self-released, www.sophomore-level-psychology.com

South Bay Bessie – It's About Time, CD

Much better than their other material I heard, South Bay Bessie's second full-length is straightforward, solid bar punk with a bit of an AC/DC influence. Song titles include "The North American Bible Salesman," "The 8th Grade Going-Away Dance" and "I Hate Math." Should be popular in today's rock-heavy climate. (AE)

Acutest Records, 528 Dodson Ct., Bay City, MI 48708, www.acutestrecords.com

Soviettes, The – LP 2, CD

A good, straight-forward punk record is hard come by these days. Thanks to The Soviettes my thirst has been quenched. The female-fronted quartet from Minneapolis throws down pop-driven punk the way it should be done: fast, catchy, and filled to the brim with attitude. Twenty-three minutes of hot damn. (BM)

Adeline Records, 5245 College Ave., Berkeley, CA 94618, www.adelinerecords.com

Spitting Teeth / 1-2-Go! Crew – split, 7"

First off, this record looks amazing. The cover art and comic-book insert are well-drawn. It's a fun release, as both bands have a humorous aspect to them. Spitting Teeth are a lot more rock than I remember. They contribute five songs of fast hardcore with some wanky solos. The 1-2-Go! Crew side makes this split essential, with their old-school rap take on hardcore song. "Walk Together Rap Together" is a parody of the 7 Seconds song, and it I think there's a clip of Kevin Seconds stage banter in the middle of it. The next song is a cover of Go! Crew member Ben Crew's other band, Damage Deposit. "Ninjas To The Back" works well as a rap song or a hardcore song. They close it out with a cover of Spitting Teeth's "Million Man Mosh." This rules. Buy it now. (DA)

1-2-3-4 Go!, c/o S. Stevenson, 782 56th St., Oakland, CA 94609, www.1234gorecords.com

Spotlight Syndicate, The – ...Forget The Static Past, CD

The Spotlight Syndicate have stripped it down to the essentials: bass, drums and a synth keyboard. The songs aren't showy or complicated, but they play them fast, with plenty of juice and plenty of energy. The vocals feel like an afterthought, but with stronger singing, they could be quite good. (DAL)

Substandard Records, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Stand-Ins, The – Clean Slate, CD

Some PP readers might be tempted to dismiss a band like this as a bunch of Monsters of Rock throwbacks slinging hard rock that verges on metallic sludge. But goddamn they write a strong hook. High quality sawdust-bar tunes. (DAL)

Medium Build, PO Box 574, Athens, GA 30603

Starvin Hungry – Damnesty, CD

The vocals sound like the Strokes' singer impersonating Danzig. The glammy, New York, I-don't-care lyrical style just made me think they sound lazy. The music is a messy, distorted garage glam punk that isn't bad, but doesn't have any memorable hooks. To sum it up: not bad, but not good. (JJG)
Grenadine, PO Box 42050 Montreal, QC H2W 2T3, Canada, www.grenadinerecords.com

Stereotyperider – Under The Influence, CD

All cover songs, hence the title. They open with "Jumping Someone Else's Train" by The Cure, though they skip one of the opening guitar leads. Not a good start. The Seaweed and Quicksand covers are done well. Thanks for covering "Cameage" and not "Hope" or "Bikeage." (DA)
Suburban Home, PO Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204, www.suburbanhomerecords.com

Stop It! – Self Made Maps, 12"

In the hardcore/DIY/punk/etc scene, there is an amazing turnover of bands from month to month. Rarely do you find a band that releases a record with a sound and songs you can grasp onto right away, but *Self Made Maps* is such a record. Without drawing a comparison, Stop It! is like a combination of the groove and song structure of mid-'90s DC bands with the rough melodies of bands like Small Brown Bike or Twelve Hour Turn and finishes it off with just a touch of modern "screamo." In a nutshell, it's melodic post-hardcore with shouted vocals, complex drumming, and groovy (not in the bad way) basslines. I always hear people add the word "stoner" when describing their sound, and I can see that, so throw that somewhere in the description too. This is an excellent record that stands out from the very first listen and will definitely get repeated spins on your turntable. (KM)

The Perpetual Motion Machine, PO Box 7364, Richmond, VA 23221, www.theperpetualmotionmachine.com

Struction – S/T, CDEP

Wow, this CD is all over the place: crazy, technical rhythms and layered harmonies created by their instruments as well as the male/female vocals. Then they slow down into a nice melodic hook, then go back to mathy eruption that is just short of chaos. Impressive. (TK)

NFI Records, c/o John Dudley VIII, 2406 Phillips Drive, Alexandria, VA 22306, www.nfiabel.com

Stun Guns – And There Was Nothing We Could Do About It, 12"

The Stun Guns are no longer around, and that's a shame. Their brand of southern rock 'n' roll and punk carries loud and true with an urgency rarely found in modern punk. I can't think of a better record to get piss drunk to than this. (BN)

Shut Up Records, PO Box 1671, Oakland, CA 94604

Suffocation – Souls To Deny, CD

OK, if you're reading these reviews in alphabetical order, you'll notice that, in my Death Angel review, I mention hating reunions. This is another one. Getting the band back together is generally a bad idea, but there's a difference between releasing an album that might have been successful in 1986 and one that's showing new-school death-metal acts how it's done. The five-song *Despise The Sun* took me by surprise in 1998, but was unfortunately Suffocation's death rattle. As a post-*Pierced From Within* release, *Despise* held its own, but just wasn't enough (especially considering that one of the five songs was a redone version of a cut on *Human Waste*). Enter *Souls To Deny*. An excellent release that doesn't hold back on the solos or blasts, classic New

York death metal has never sounded better. Nothing Suffocation can do now will ever touch *Pierced*, but if they can keep serving up albums like this one, I'm not going to complain. If only one of these could be distributed to every Slipknot fan so that they knew what real metal was. (DH)

Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapse.com

Summer At Shatter Creek – Sink Or Swim, CDEP

Craig Gurwich, the force behind Summer At Shatter Creek, delivers evocative music reminiscent of British sad-bands Travis and Coldplay. With his haunting voice and ethereal piano melodies, Gurwich pulls the listener into his world of memories and isolation with a certain level of comfort and warmth. An exquisitely simple solo album. (LW)

Redder Records, c/o Adam Christensen, 1600 East Avenue, Apt. 605, Rochester, NY 14610, www.redderrecords.com

Supersleuth – Thirty-one Months, CD

7 Seconds-style speedy hardcore with the same drumbeats throughout the entire album. It's monotonous, and 7 Seconds does this style of music a lot better. There is absolutely nothing original or unique about this band, and all their songs seem to blend together. (EH)

Failed Experiment, 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago, IL 60609, www.failedexperiment.com

Sumo – La Libera Danza Quotidiana, CDEP

Eight songs of Italian hardcore with a sound that rangers from '80s-style punk to the newer, spastic screamy hardcore and all that lies in between. Despite the record's lack of cohesiveness, I enjoyed it. There were quite a few interesting guitar parts, and the lyrics seemed sincere. (KM)

Self-released, Paolo Iambertini, via Normandia 46, 40132 Bologna, Italy

Sunday Morning Einsteins – Kangnave, CD

Don't be fooled by the goofy name; this Swedish hardcore band can thrash it up with the best of them. Lots of shouted vocals, heavy riffing, double-time drumming and Discharge influence. A pretty good release, but it lost a bit of momentum toward the middle. (KM)

Prank Records, PO Box 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141-0892, www.prankrecords.com

Sutek Conspiracy – S/T, CDEP

Somewhere between screamo and Swedish metal, you have Sutek Conspiracy. Those wacky, bat-shrieking vocals mixed with metallic dual (over-dubbed?) guitars. There's something rough about them that keeps them on the hardcore side, in a good way. A succinct will and testament to this defunct band. (NS)

Ed Walters Records, 2416 S. Warnock St., Philadelphia, PA 19148, www.edwaltersrecords.org

Systems Officer – S/T, CD EP

Armistead Burwell Smith IV (aka Zach) of San Diego's highly acclaimed Three Mile Pilot and Pinback steps up to the plate with an impressive solo debut. His breathy vocal melodies and hauntingly gorgeous walking guitar arrangements are back, beaten by mellow, but striking, electroesque drums. Being that Zach is the primary songwriter in Pinback, it should come as no surprise that the Systems Officer record sounds similar to the group's first two releases. Although much of his music is comparable, a solid path of progression is also evident. Zach's unique songwriting style and diverse musical abilities are consistently unforgettable and enchanting, making the majority of his released catalogue essential. The songs on his

Reviewer Spotlight: Sean Moeller (SM)

Superdrag, Regretfully Yours. Laundry must be easy for John Davis. He separates the darks from nothing. All he's ever worn are black T-shirts and matching church-going trousers. Right now, for all we know, he could be stepping down into his basement, with hamper and Tide. It should be a calming task, the wet sloshing of cloth and the soft whir of the tumble dry that returns damp, smoke-seasoned bar clothes back to normal. For Davis, this rebirthing act might get him sweetly angered about the way his socks are rubbing with his briefs or vice versa. But his anger and disappointment, no matter how prevalent, always seem to come from that person who cares too much, not the person who doesn't care at all. He never tells you to look both ways before crossing a busy intersection; he just rolls up his sleeves, shows you the concrete scars and explains how it hurt him once. *Regretfully Yours*, the first full-length from this Knoxville, Tenn., group, gave a peek under the curtain at Davis' deviled legs and the hard-smoking maelstrom he willed breathe with each doubt confessed and sadness detailed. He drills home the notions that nothing's easy and everything's misleading. There are catch-22s and 23s, and what Superdrag does best is swirling them into songs that need no explanation. Short on ambivalence and tall on sincerity, they make you want to jump off a bridge, but catch yourself on the last possible girding, where just enough rush was captured.

Current occupations: The Streets, *A Grand Don't Come For Free*; Rilo Kiley, *More Adventurous*; The Killers, *Hot Fuss*; Lewis Black, *Rules Of Enragement*; Koufax, *It Had To Do With Love*; Desoto Reds, *Hanglide Thru Yer Window* (reviewed in this issue).



latest endeavor are no exception, leaving heads uncontrollably bobbing and souls sufficiently cleaned. (BM)

Ace Fu Records, PO Box 552, New York, NY 10009, www.acefu.com

Takaru – There Can Be Only None, CD

Pummeling hardcore with plenty of low-end. Elements of thrash mixed with *Souls At Zero*-era Neurosis coalesce for a winning combination. There's also a nice blend of throaty and screamed vocals that keep the album sounding fresh from start to finish. Definitely a winner. (DH)

Alone Records, PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.alonerecords.com

Tamion 12 Inch – Let's Suffer, CD

Self-proclaimed "Don't Wave" music, this lives up to its title. Do the dance o' death to this dreary dance music. Goth kids feel sorry for these kids doing a downer version of Le Tigre. (DM)

Ersatz Audio, PO Box 02713, Detroit, MI 48202, www.ersatzaudio.com

Taxpayer – I'll Do My Best To Stay Healthy, CD

The hell of cubicles and wage slavery inspired movies like *Office Space*, the TV series *The Office* and now this record. With hooky power-pop as their media, they explore the soul-crushing aspects of the modern working world. Try not to kill yourself listening. (RR)

Ernest Jenning Record Co., 68 Cheever Place, #2, Brooklyn, NY 11231, www.ernestjenning.com

Teenage Rehab – Worse Than A Job, CD

Teenage Rehab has songs about some subjects that the Ramones so many years ago: hating work, going insane and simple, easily relatable ideas. The music is tight, hard rockin' punk, but something's lacking on this CD. I think what it lacked were any surprises. (JIG)

Amp Records, 153 Balsam Ave. S. Hamilton, Ontario, L8M 3B6 Canada, www.amprecords.com

Ten Foot Pole – Subliminal Messages, CD

Just like with Pulley's new album, I'm getting a renewed interest in this "old" skate-punk sound that saturated the mid '90s. But this isn't quite your old Ten Foot Pole. Dennis' voice has improved since the departure of Scott (of Pulley), and the music has gotten a little chunkier, less cookie-cutter. It's a bit of a progression, yet they also remind me of NOFX's more metal, older albums. There's a little more anger evident here. The lyrics still cover varied topics, from political to romantic, without getting preachy or sappy in either case. I'm sure people wrote off the slick pop punk sound even back when it was a little fresher, but Ten Foot Pole has always been sincere. Given their punk pedigree, dating back to the Scared Straight days, you have to respect their endurance. (NS)

Go Kart, PO Box 20, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, www.gokartrecords.com

That Was Then – It's All Been Said Before, 7"

1980s-influenced hardcore with gang vocals, breakdowns and lyrics about standing by your friends/family—truly, this *has* been said (and done) before. However, this was a decent listen and will appeal to fans of the style. Five dollars gets you a 7" and two pins. (KM)

Best of Times, 3120 Killarney Ln., Northport, AL 35473, www.bestoftimesrecords.com

Theraphosa – Blondi, CDEP

Breaking the code of bold letters spread throughout the lyric sheet reveals the tip: When you know how your suffering came to be, you are already on the path to emancipation. Theraphosa's freedom from its suffering is a long way off. This band has enough devils running through its bloodstream

that any visible cuts are clotted with pitchforks and bifurcated tails. Pessimistic and dark, they run with their insecurities. (SM)

Save Your Servant, PO Box 14267, Cincinnati, OH 45250, www.saveyourservant.com

Thingz, The – S/T, CD

So simplistic and silly that it makes listening hard. Using just a handful of chords, this California band sparingly write anything that could operate beyond an inside joke. They have whip-crack punk odes to quiet coyotes and watchful chickens in graveyards among the 14 tracks. A little too pointless. (SM)

Pelado Records, 521 W. Wilson #C103, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, www.peladorecords.com

This Ship Will Sink – S/T, CD

This Ship Will Sink is all about the message. Their lyrics touch on topics from human rights to breast cancer to Christian hypocrisy. The sound goes from harsh and intense to technical and moody from song to song. And these boys are practicing what they preach: All the profits from this release will go to Human Rights Campaign and the Matthew Shepard Foundation. This is some good, strong stuff. (LW)

Waking Records, 1803 Riverside Dr. #5M, New York, NY 10034, www.wakingrecords.com

33 West – So Far Off To A Bad Start, CD

Virginian ska band with impeccable articulation. They pronounce every syllable as crisply as a fresh carrot, giving them a nice selling point. They're into partying and enjoying the most popular of illegal substances as suggested on "The Tijuana Song." If you'll be enrolled in college courses for the next few years, these guys will be around, opening for O.A.R. and Howie Day, so make sure you can find that closest Ticketmaster outlet. (SM)

Self-released, 13409 Brookfield Drive, Chantilly, VA 20151, www.33westmusic.com

This Is A Process Of Still Life – S/T, CD

Chad Clarke (Beauty Pill/Smart Went Crazy) mastered this, so you know what to expect from this Portland, Ore., band. Finely produced and tight, the sound is creative instrumentals with some sampled taped recording, but the drums really stand out. The guitar just echoes from one note to the next. (DI)

Firefly Sessions, PO Box 5869, Missoula, MT 59806, www.fireflysessions.com

This Moment In Black History – Midwesterncuttallstick, CD

This oddly named band comes off like an even more slap-happy version of Richard Hell, full of crunchy, spark-spewing, Arcwelderish guitar licks and blues hipster vocal snarls. High octave stuff with moments of inspiration but too much that sounds like filler. (DAL)

Version City Records, PO Box 22183, Brooklyn, NY 11201, www.versioncityrecords.com

Tiger Army – III: Ghost Tigers Rise, CD

Pop-punk with a heavy dose of the upright bass and a bit of the macabre. Psychobilly, I guess. The guys in Tiger Army are talented musicians that keep churning out that SoCal sound without an ounce of originality. Fine for what it is. (LW)

Hellcat Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.hell-cat.com

Till Death – S/T, 7"

This is going to sound strange, but Till Death somehow manage to pull off combining elements of skate punk with metal overtones. Weird, I know, but the gang vocals, double bass and ability to circle pit at any given moment are the clinchers. Most likely this issue's biggest sleeper hit. (DH)

Phantom Sound Records, PO Box 991053, Redding, CA 96099, www.phantomssound.com

Tilly And The Wall – Wild Like Children, CD

Let's get the distractions out of the way. Tilly And The Wall's debut is the first release for the Saddle Creek off-shoot and Conor Oberst-run Team Love label. This band does not have a drummer; they have a tap dancer. Stay with me, because this is a great album. After my first listen, I was addicted. The band seems to approach each song, all which lament the loss of love and innocence, with such passion that they are hard to ignore. The album swings back and forth from blissful pop to a folk-country mix and is consistently upbeat. Kianna Alarid, Neely Jenkins and Derek Pressnall share vocal duties, with the ability to harmonize in a way that would make Phil Spector glow. My only (minor) complaint is when tap-dancer Jaime Williams is replaced by a drum machine in a few songs. That aside, Tilly And The Wall are infectious. Just a listen to tracks "Fell Down The Stairs," "Bessa" and "The Ice Storm, Big Bust, And You" to see the talent these Nebraskans possess. (MP)

Team Love Records, www.team-love.com

Time Machine – Slow Your Roll, CD

In the case of Time Machine, the name says it all. This Los Angeles-based hip-hop act spits relaxed, old-school hip hop in the vein of A Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul. There's no undecipherable double-time flows or roughneck threats on this record; this is hip-hop purity, smooth, straightforward, and fun. (BM)

Glow-in-the-Dark PO Box 29068, Los Angeles, CA 90029-0068, www.giltrecords.com

Timewellspent – S/T, CD

As precious goes, these songs couldn't get any more so. They're like little porcelain candy dishes with kittens painted onto them. Try as you might—were you the toughest heart on the planet—you could not hate these songs. They do Belle and Sebastian-types of things, but softer. (SM)

Parasol Records, 303 West Griggs St., Urbana, IL 61801, www.parasol.com

Todd – S/T, CDEP

Reeling, roaring sludge rock straight out of England, Todd is fronted by ex-Hammerhead Craig Clouse. Plenty of distortion, crazy Casio sounds, hot hand claps and some screeching riffs make this album an interesting listen for metal fans. Track four, "You Wouldn't Believe Me," brings a hefty dose of the rock. (LW)

Bulb Records, 4609 Hunt Rd., Adrian, MI 49221, www.bulbrecords.com

Toxic Reasons – Dedication 1979-1988

Good hardcore with a strong rock influence. Sort of like DOA or when Boston hardcore bands started going rock. There's a nice cover of Neil Young's "Ohio" as well. This originally came out in 1988 and it's better than a lot of current hardcore, but it doesn't quite live up to their old material. (NS)

Re-Force Records, T. Drescher, Wohlerhol 4, 30900 Wedemark, Germany

Traitors – Bring Me The Head Of Matt Skiba, 7"

Chicago hardcore with charged melodies, rough vocals and an abundance of raw aggression. This is the kind of punk that was synonymous with Chicago once upon a time. Matt Skiba, whom the booklet accurately describes as a "goth punk star" played drums on Traitors' early records. On bloody red vinyl. (BN)

Johann's Face Records, PO Box 479164, Chicago, IL 60647, www.johannsfacerecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr.)Dana Morse (DM)

Weston, Got Beat Up. The Descendents broke up when I was in high school or shortly beforehand, so after I collected their records, I had nothing else to get, and thus true pop punk died for me. They were the only ones who wrote songs that I could relate with. Sure there were other great bands with similar sounds like Doc Hopper, NOFX, etc. that sounded good, but they all missed that thing that made it relatable. So I got sucked into the post-hXc/metal scene of my mood until Weston came through with *Policy of 3* at Hampshire College. (Actually their van broke down, but Weston still played.) My God, I hadn't heard such sweet songs that were both fun, aggro and humorous (not stupid like goofy bands of the genre even though Weston had their moments). I was taken in by the harmonies, the hooks, multiple vocalists, the fun and then some. It was like all those times dancing to Descendents records in the basement but from a brand new perspective. This time I saw the band from their first LP 'till their demise. Of their five releases, *Got Beat Up* is still my favorite, with classic tracks like "Retarded," "New Shirt/Heather Lewis" and "Superbus 23." Who am I kidding? The *whole* CD is fucking awesome, all 14 tracks. If you haven't heard this one, *you must own it*. 1996 may not have been as good of a year if this didn't exist.

What else gives me the willies: !!!, Louden Up Now, Les Savy Fav, Inches, Black Eyes, Cough, new RJD2, Franz Ferdinand, Morrissey, Oxford Collapse.

9 Trapdoor Fucking Exit – Be Not Content, CD

Holy smokes! This band put out a good EP a few issues back, but this is a great album. Some bands write 10 or so songs and call it an album, and some bands write *albums*. *Be Not Content* flows well with a lot of diversity and a lot of great songs. They start out with a foundation of solid rock 'n' roll, but mix in some spazzy hardcore and spacey rock sounds. At their most caustic, they recall bands like Rites Of Spring or Drive Like Jehu, but there's only a glimpse of that evident in this unique band. There are times where they take the pace down, forfeiting none of the heaviness or intensity. That's probably due to the fact that the guitarists never stop laying down thick riffs with cool, note-filled rhythms, like a sped up version of Sabbath or CR. Awesome stuff. (NS)

No Idea, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.noidearecords.com

9 True North - Somewhat Similar, CD

Fantastic, Fugazi-flavored rock with a really solid rhythm section. The bass is clever, and the vocals come at you from two different directions with solid lyrics. The best part about True North is that they are absolutely original. They chant, they sing, they scream, and most of all they rock. Their songs are spazzy and fluid, fast and slow. True North found the perfect dichotomy—their music quite impressive and downright phenomenal. (FH)

No Idea Records, PO Box 14636 Gainesville, FL 32604, www.noidearecords.com

20 Miles – Life Doesn't Rhyme, CD

This is a project of Judah Bauer, best known for his work playing guitar for the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. But be warned, if you're looking for the same bizarre sensibility that defined that band, with the ironic style and experimental content, avoid 20 Miles. This is sincere, straight-forward country pop. (DAL)

Fat Possum Records, PO Box 1923, Oxford, MS 38655, www.fatpossum.com

Tycker Dü - No Leaves Left / Close To It, 5"

Holy *#@%\$! I opened the CD-sized envelope and out came the coolest record I have ever seen. I admit I was already biased before even playing it. Because of the size, it was extremely difficult to get it to play on my record player. The arm kept raising and moving off the record, but I was finally able to outsmart it. It's pretty good, fast melodic hardcore. But I wish it was as cool and unique as the record itself. (JIG)

No contact information provided

Tyler Speaks For Me – S/T. CDEP

In a self-proclaimed battle against conformity, Tyler Speaks For Me does its best to craft intelligent and thoughtfully abstract lyrics that show they're more than power-chord thrashers. Sonically, more attention to changing

from formulaic pop-screamo guitar and drumming to a slightly more original drift would get them all purple hearts. (SM)

Self-released, 25 Covered Bridge Road, Pequea, PA 17565, www.tylerspeaksforme.com

🎧 **Ukrainians. The - Istoriva: The Best of the Ukrainians. CD**

Imagine The Smiths' *The Queen Is Dead*, but harder and sung in Ukrainian with traditional instruments. That's how good this album is. (They actually put out a whole EP of Smiths covers.) This band originated from the Leeds-based indie-pop band The Wedding Present, but they used to play a Ukrainian track during rehearsals. Guitarist Peter Solowka, a son of a Ukrainian immigrant, got the band to play a set some traditional songs for the John Peel show, which was released as *Ukrainski Vistupi V Johna Peela* in 1989 and rereleased in 2000. After that, Solowka left to form The Ukrainians, and the rest is history, or *istoriya*. The result is the finest Ukrainian music I've ever heard (easy to claim). These are traditionals overhauled for more speed and power. Matching Wedding Present guitar velocity with accordions, mandolins, and tsimbali actually works. The creativity really comes out in their covers, like the Velvet Underground's "Venus In Furs" or the Sex Pistols' "Anarchy In The UK." For many, this may be a novelty listen, but it's much better than that, and this album serves as a great collection of their work. The Ukrainians are a blast. (BA)

Omnium Recordings, PO Box 7367, Minneapolis, MN 55407, www.omnium.com

Unannounced - Imaginary Therapy, CD

Unannounced play creative whiner-core from Kansas, with overlong songs, tempo changes and a general aura of creepiness. Technically adept and oddly commercial, it's a primarily annoying release that's well executed, but frustratingly drab. (AF)

Salty Records, www.saltyrecords.com

Uncle Dave & The Waco Brothers - Nine Slices Of My Midlife Crisis. CD

The Waco's teamed up with an old acquaintance of theirs, "Uncle" Dave Herndon, to get a handful of his wise-cracking, self-deprecating, country-rock ditties on tape. Good mix of drunken ballads and Stonesque rockers. Kind of reminds me of an Iggy Pop solo record with Dwight Yoakam producing. A fun album. (AJ)

Buried Treasure, 162 Congress St., Brooklyn, NY 11201. www.buriedtreasurerecords.com

Undying – At History's End, CD

Ugh. Paint-by-numbers hardcore with the ever-present metal edge. Sometimes a band needs just to pick a genre and stick with it, because when the crossover fails, it *really* fails. Case in point: Undying. Weak production, boring songs and generically placed breakdowns. Another reason reunions are bad ideas. (DH)

One Day Savior, PO Box 372, Williston Park, NY 11596-0372, www.onedaysavior.com

Unit – I Came Here To Tell You How It's Going To Begin, CD

When I was 19, I bought a compilation called *Journey Into Ambient Groove* because I thought I could see into my soul or some shit. This could be a new generation's ticket to sparse techno enlightenment, but don't ask me. I never saw past my intestines. (DAL)

Regenerate Industries, 4060 boul. St. Laurent #602b, Montreal, QC, H2W 1Y9, Canada,
www.regenerateindustries.com

Unlucky Atlas / The Antiques – split, 7"

Unlucky Atlas have a nondescript boy/girl vocal song about the rivers of the world. It's good for geography, but nothing else. The Antiques, from DC, don't do much better as a guitar/keyboard duo. I'm not a fan of records that don't have much of a point. (DI)

For Documentation Only. 5140 Crayton Place, S. Naples, FL 34103. www.forddocumentationonly.com

Unsacred Hearts – S/T, CDEP

Great, stripped down rock 'n' roll from this Long Island, N.Y., band. They combine basic song structures with angular guitar riffs, beats that make you shake your ass and some cool vocal swagger. It's a raw, dark, sexy and dangerous celebration of rock 'n' roll. (JC)

Serious Business Records, 538 Johnson Ave., Suite 205, Brooklyn, NY 11237,
www.seriousbusinessrecords.com

9 Urinals – What Is Real And What Is Not, CD

Listening to this and, well, looking at the accompanying band photos, I couldn't help but think about that climactic line from John Kerry's stump speech around the time he clinched the nomination. You know, he's surrounded by fellow veterans, saying, "We may be a little older, we may be a little grayer, but we still know how to fight for our country." Well, the Urinals are a little older and grayer (not as old as Kerry, in fairness), but they still know how to shred for their punk scene. One of the premiere late '70s, early '80s LA punk bands, they went through other permutations (100 Flowers), broke up, reformed and have now released an epic album with a distinctive, evolved sound. It's more pop than hardcore, but it is soulful, clever pop that has the power to make you grin in the verse and then break your heart in the chorus. In LA punk parlance, let's say it's more X than Black Flag, but it's really just the Urinals, going strong in the 21st century. (DAL)

Warning Label Records, 49 School St., Urmals, MA 02476, www.warninglabelrecords.com;
Happy Squirrel Records, www.happysquirrel.com

US Roughnecks – Twenty Bucks And Two Black Eyes. CD

Nicely produced, rough-and-tumble punk rock from Hellcat Records. The music has some driving, rock 'n' roll leads with ragged vocals singing about

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Moss (BM)

No Knife, *Fire In The City Of Automatons*. About four years ago, while visiting a friend in Phoenix, I was turned on to San Diego's No Knife via their second full-length, *Hit Man Dreams*. The band's inventive guitar playing and complexly artistic take on post-punk immediately caught my attention. However, it wasn't until about six months later, while perusing the bins at good ol' Amoeba Records, that I stumbled upon this here gem. On an instinctive whim I whipped out my last 12 bucks n' change, picked up the record, walked home and, not knowing exactly what to expect, popped it in the hi-fi. *Fire In The City Of Automatons* is the type of record that paralyzes the listener, mouth gaping, toes tapping, with all systems stimulated. At the first blistering drop of "Academy Flight Song" (a not-so subtle reference to Mission Of Burma) I became a devout captive. The jazzy chord structures, serrated melodies, flawless power rhythms and syrupy vocal harmonies that seamlessly convene on this record redefined my entire take on music. Although the record mellows out during its midsection, it never falls short of greatness. What makes *Fire In The City Of Automatons* such an amazing force is how songs creatively work outside of the guidelines, while also respecting the importance of punk's simple, sonic power. All of No Knife's releases are more than worthwhile, but this record is an absolute must, deserving the highest of praise.

Undetected Current Issues: The New Trust, Form of Rocket, Mt. St. Helens, Robocop Kraus, Sweet Cobra, Riddle of Steel, Sainte Catherines, Hieruspecs, Fingers Cut Machine, Just A Fire.

Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

Operation Ivy. If there is a record out there considered taboo to write or talk about, *Energy* is certainly it. When punk "broke" in 1994, you couldn't pick up a record without seeing Op Ivy mentioned in the liner notes or the bio as a direct influence. And that's exactly what makes this record so tempting to write about: It matters. In its short history Op Ivy was a Gilman Street mainstay in the early East Bay scene, playing alongside of the likes of Grimpshrine and Isocracy. With their highly energetic delivery, fast, catchy melodies and messages of unity, the band garnered a loyal following before bowing to the pressure and breaking up after a very short run. As the band's lone record full-length, *Energy* lives up to both its name and the billing. Chock full of quick, short bursts of punk aggression and ska-tinged melodies, the record shows the band seamlessly traversing the multitude of influences to create a raw, original and timeless sound. Jesse Michaels' strained vocals resonate loudly above the tight interplay of Matt Freeman's bass and Tim Armstrong's guitar, giving the songs that extra burst of hectic aggression. While "Unity," "Take Warning" and "Sound System" are the band's most popular songs, it is the rougher, edgier tracks that make *Energy* such an appropriately titled and well-balanced record. "Vulnerability" and "The Crowd" are the two songs I'm most likely to play as a way of introducing the band to those unlucky enough not to have yet discovered them.

Songs in my heavy rotation: The Streets, "Dry Your Eyes"; Crime In Stereo "Terribly Softly"; Against Me! "The Politics Of Starving"; Shot Baker "Gatland"; The Revolvers, "Do You Have The Time."



drinking and how much the cops and government suck. The basslines are super catchy and enjoyable. A cut above the rest in this genre for sure. (KM)
Hellcat Records, 2790 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.hell-cat.com

Used To Be, The – Shameless Self-Destruction, CD

The Used To Be used to be The Used, got it? Well it makes sense considering they recorded their LP 10 years after they broke up. Listening to this reminded me of 1994 when everyone was tired of Sub Pop. A few pop hooks keeps this from becoming grunge. Those who want to teleport, here is your machine. (EA)

Wrecked 'Em Wreckords, PO Box 240701, Memphis, TN 38124, www.wrecked-em.com

Vaguely Starshaped – The Lamplight EP, CDEP

Damn these jerks for doing one of those half CD/half clear plastic pieces of crap that won't play in my van's CD player. The music is just cheesy, overproduced emo-pop with too many effects. The third of four songs was the least annoying, but not enough to save this future coaster. (TK)

Losing Blueprint Records, 94 Prince St., #3, Boston, MA 02113, www.losingblueprint.com

Vainfest – VTOL, CD

This muscular, snarling Japanese punk band plays with energy and spirit, with bared teeth instead of harmony. Too light to be hardcore, they would make most pop-punk bands cry. It makes it all the sweeter later on in the record when the angry screams take a turn for the melodic. (DAL)

Blue Blue Blue, 26-1 Hon-machi tsu-shi mie 514-0831, Japan

Vanishing Kids – Rest The Glove That Wears You Down, CD

Indie rock with touches of gloom and that new-wave stuff. I bet these kids are Bauhaus and emo fans, because this is too upbeat to be goth-rock. Not bad, but not my thing. (DM)

Self-released, www.vanishingkids.us

Vanishing Kids – S/T, 7"

This 7" holds two midtempo, moody songs reminiscent of The Pixies' darker side. But what makes this band stand out are the vocals, which have sort of a dry, low new-wave feel that nicely complements the intricate guitar lines and solid drums. (LW)

Self-released, 432 W. Wilson Apt. #7, Madison, WI 53703

Via Audio – S/T, CDEP

Via Audio's EP of noisy indie pop, or "aggressive pop" as they call it, runs the gamut from guitar-driven rock to electronic-based noise. There are a couple songs worth listening to again. In others, the melodies fall flat, capping off at mediocrity. (AJA)

Kill Normal Records, 35 Hidden Meadow Drive, Amherst, MA 01002, www.killnormal.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Missy Paul (MP)

Television Personalities... And Don't the Kids Just Love It. I first came across the Television Personalities while reading the biography of Creation Records and its founder, Alan McGee. The book spoke highly of the band, so I ran out and picked up this debut album. Immediately I was blown away, but angered that I didn't know about this band sooner. First released in 1980 on Rough Trade, this debut album has been overlooked for a long time. Bands like The Jam, Elvis Costello and Squeeze seep through the music of the Television Personalities, but it's what they do with it that counts. The TVPs go more lo-fi, more raw. They blend in some Beach Boys melodies and psychedelic rock. In doing so, they create a record that is a bit schizophrenic, but tightly woven all the same. As they bounce between styles, they create masterful songs that tell stories about the ordinary in only a way a British band can. The album sounds old, yet ahead of its time. Listen to "I Know Where Syd Barrett Lives," and you'll see where the Pastels and Belle & Sebastian got some of their ideas. Like Pavement? Well, check out "A Picture Of Dorian Gray." Not to mention that the Libertines should be very thankful for this band. Actually dozens of modern British bands that are indebted to the TVPs, but they might not know it. After all, not many realize this influential force that this band has, but everyone should.

In between Match Game reruns, I'm finding time for: The Streets, *A Grand Don't Come For Free*; Snow Patrol, *Final Straw*; Jay-Z, *The Black Album*; Franz Ferdinand, *S/T*; Black Box Recorder, *Passionola*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Rex Reason (RR)

Hickey, Various States of Disrepair. Ah, pop-punk, such a rightly disdained figure of speech. But how else do you describe indisputably punk music with big, sharp hooks? Hooks so big they'll be in your brain forever. And it doesn't get punker than Hickey. Their 7" records have been hard to find from the day they were pressed on ultra-obscure labels. On tour they hung signs offering to trade merch for drugs. They retaliated against a notorious ska-punk band for bad treatment by stealing a horn. When said ska band left Hickey threatening messages, Hickey took the messages and released it as a split 7-inch with that band. The resulting zine and record combo is all that historians will need to understand real American punk rock from the 1990s. Hickey was scummy, trashy yet smart as a whip punk rock personified. They should have been legends in their time, but with the passing of singer/guitarist Matty Luv in 2002, they probably will never get their due. Get hooked thanks to the stories, but fall in love when you hear their music. *Various States of Disrepair* collects most of their 7" output. Get that and their full-length on Probe. Make sure there aren't any squares at my funeral.

Five things that have had my ear lately: Mission Of Burma, *ONoffON*; Paintbox, "Cry Of The Sheeps" 7"; Cougars, *Manhandler* (reviewed in this issue); Thee Snuff Project, *Dyin' Ain't Much Of A Livin'* (reviewed in this issue); Miles Davis, *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* box set.

Vialka – The Republic Of The Bored And Boring, CDEP

Vialka is an artsy, unpredictable rock band that uses a mixture of rock, jazz, blues and maybe even a little classic rock. An explosion is one good way to describe this band, which has an awesome start-stop style. Vialka is quiet but loud and varies from big sounds to small ones—they rock out, then get mellow, then throw a temper tantrum. This album is truly art, an incredible record. (EH)

Self-released, www.vialka.com

Voice Of A Secret – Tilt, CDEP

To me a sign that a record is going to be only mildly interesting is espied in the shortness of the song titles. One-word song titles are so uninformative that I've lost all hope that the referenced songs will give me anything more substantial than an attempt at something bigger. All four tracks on this EP are four-lettered cutlets that Staind would have made had the members of Silverchair been their big brothers. (SM)

Self-released, www.voiceofasecret.com

Volante – Static Until Sunrise, CD

The press release highlights the singer's terminally ill father. If that is supposed to foretell "emotionally tumultuous, I'd rather let the music speak for itself. Otherwise, it's wonderful indie emo that's spot-on Christie Front Drive homage, had they wrote more driving rock parts than soaring guitar licks. (VC)

Guilt Ridden Pop, PO Box 11894, Saint Paul, MN 55111, www.guiltriddenpop.com

Vowels, The – In Cahoots With..., CD

This NYC band plays straight-forward, guitar-centered rock, and that's about it. If you saw this band in a bar, you wouldn't hate them, but they wouldn't grab your attention, either. (MP)

The Sea Isle, www.theseaisle.com

VPR – Aural Assault, CD

Sample song titles: "My Girlfriend Turned Into A Lesbian" and "Whisky Dick." This is a lame and juvenile attempt at being tongue-in-cheek. Up-tempo, generic punk, the kind of release that Beer City Records would have put out in the late '90s. (DA)

Squirrel Heart Records/self-released, PO Box 5871, Arlington, VA 22205, www.vprcd.com

Walker, Stu – Theft, Arson, Vice, Murder and Death, CD

Stylized speak singing + fake big band/jazz + trip hop = irritating hipster wankery. (DAL)

Odd Halo Recordings, PO Box 5359, Gloucester, MA 01930, www.oddhalo.com

Washington Social Club – Catching Looks, CD

If I had to describe what it was like listening to *Catching Looks*, the most accurate comparison I can make would be to my first viewing of Rob Zom-

bie's gore-fest *House Of A 1000 Corpses*. The most obvious similarity being that during the entire span of both, I could not stop myself from cringing incessantly. From the rousing chorus of "We were probably high!" from the aptly titled "Are You High?" to the complete drudgery of the faux-reggae tipped "Charlie The Russian," Washington Social Club sound entirely too much like Rick Springfield for my personal comfort zone. If that is your scene, then so be it, but personally I'd rather save my cringing for the chainsaw scenes and brutal scalplings, thank you very much. (MS)

Badman Recording Co., www.badmanrecordingco.com

Weeping Minds Of Silence / Ximel – split, CD

First things first, split CDs are lame, people. Vinyl is always a better choice when doing a split between two bands, especially when they have two totally different sounds. That said, WMOS have some awesome, moody, indie-rock songs with pretty discordant melodies and lots of interesting changes. It's too bad the vocals sound like some guy doing Creed on karaoke night, because even though the music is so good, the vocals killed it for me. Ximel are more on the heavier side with long (two of the songs clock in around 10 minutes), droning, heavily distorted, yet still melodic songs. The songs have sort of a spacey quality about them that reminds me of Cave-In's *Jupiter* LP, but less metal and less in-depth. I didn't care for the vocals on this one too much, either, but most of it was instrumental anyway. Overall, a damn good listen if you can ignore some not-so-good vocals. (KM)

Space Patrol, 14 Avenue George Sand, 37700 La Ville Aux Dames, France, www.thespacepatrol.com

What The Kids Want – Loud Quiet Loud, CD

Their 7" was one of 2003's best records, and it was exciting to see this Bloomington, Ind., band on the cover of *MRR* last August. It's about time their full-length came out, and it's a thoroughly excellent album. They traded in their lo-fi recording techniques for modern convenience, but the songs are so catchy that they don't need edgy production to get their point across. They play that brand of sloppy pop-punk that fans of Plan-It-X Records, O.C.C. and Devil Is Electric know and love, but WTKW are distinguished by an exceptionally talented vocalist, Ali. She has one of the strangest, most nasal voices ever recorded, which might not sound like an endorsement, but it's remarkably likeable. The lyrics attempt to be political via the personal and are only occasionally ridiculous, as on the song "My Last Name." This summer they did double duty, playing the Warped Tour during the day and DIY venues at night and should still be on tour when this issue hits the stands. Punk pricing gets you this essential disc for just \$5 ppd. What are you waiting for? Go see them and/or check out this CD. (AE)

Smack Dab in the Middle, 5339 Moro Rd., Moro, IL 62067, www.geocities.com/sdm_records

White Mud Free Way / v/a Lonesome Recordings

White Mud Free Way – Last Year's Junk, CD

These McGill University grads' debut CD is a little bit country and a little electro, which somehow works. Nice contributions from vocalist Mari Solivan; her vocals ring soft and pristine over the bass-heavy beats. (JG)

Bar None, PO Box 1704, Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.bar-none.com

Whitmore, William E. / Flaccid Trip – split, 7"

The Whitmore side is a great, old-fashioned folk-country diddy, recorded minimally (just vox and guitar) to give a more aged, Appalachian sound. Flaccid Trip presents an intricate, fuzzy and serene instrumental track. Good stuff. (MG)

Scenesetter Credentials, PO Box 1275, Iowa City, IA 52244, www.scenesetter.com

Wildhearts, The – Must Be Destroyed, CD

These guys have toured with The Darkness, so major labels are probably thinking bands like this are the next "big thing." Poppy, cornball rock 'n' roll. (KM)

Gut Records, PO Box 9214, London W9 2BR, www.gutrecords.com

XFilesX – Excruciation, CD

Twenty-two songs in 15 minutes? The playing time alone will give you a good idea as to what XFilesX sound like: fast and furious hardcore with a few slower parts tossed in for good measure. Solid and probably insane live. (DH)

Trash Art, PO Box 725, Providence, RI 02901, www.soundandculture.com

Zann – For The Kids – By The Kids, CD

This album is vegan straightedge hardcore with German lyrics. It lacks creativity, with its overdone *chugga-chugga* breakdowns and typical, glass-shattering vocals. They could be better if they mixed up the metalcore formula a bit. (EH)

Geekscene, 25 Park Place Margate Kent, CT9 1LE, UK, www.geekscene.co.uk

Zeke – 'Til The Livin' End, CD

Zeke does their newest installment of their Motorhead impression. These boys have been around to produce solid rock 'n' roll for quite awhile, and the 15 tracks on this disc are rock solid. (EA)

Relapse Records, 1720 State Rd., Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapse.com

Zoambo Zoet Workestra – Every Day In Every Sense I Less Regress, CD

Combining noisy-din horns, meandering jingle-jangle guitars and a driving rhythm section is usually best left in the hands of the most capable experimental composers. These guys aren't it, but somehow their results are still interesting. An eclectic album that defies categorization. (CC)

Manufacture, www.noiseweb.com/manufacture

V/A – BC Records Compilation, CD

Eight bands from Westchester County show that there's nothing like suburban angst to percolate innovative rock. They arrange the bands in

chronological order of their first show so we get veterans The Banned opening with a handful of rip-roaring, brainy-punk eruptions. Good stuff follows from bands including Morgan Storm and Heads Up Display. (DAL)

BC Records, 45 Lincoln Avenue, Tuckahoe, NY 10707, www.bcrecs.com

V/A – Boston, A Punk And Hardcore Compilation!, 2xCD

Documenting the grittier side of the punk scene in Boston from 2002-03, this comp captures just 60 of the bands from the area. You can check out Street Dogs, Suspect Device, Pug Uglies, Toxic Narcotic and many more here. (DM)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143 Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

V/A – Cool Grrls Kick Ass!: Coolgrrls.com...Cruisin' Around The World, CD

The informative website coolgrrls.com brings us this diverse compilation of female-fronted punk and indie-rock bands from the U.S., Europe and South America. I enjoyed The Hi-Tops from Munich, Curlee Wurlee from Paris, The Cherry Pops from Essen and The Randies from LA best. (AE)

Coolgrrls.com, PO Box 186, Balboa Island, CA 92662, www.coolgrrls.com

V/A – The Emo Diaries, Chapter 10: The Hope I Hide Inside, CD

When Deep Elm released the first chapter of this series back in 1996, I don't think anyone could have prepared them for the exponential growth and subsequent backlash that the dirty little "e" word would spawn. The label went ahead with the compilations regardless, with this being the final chapter in the series. While the standards for admissions have seemingly been set to include artists who border on self-parody, (a band entitled *A Month Of Somedays* has a song entitled "A Window's Pain"), this series should always be remembered as providing some dignity and respect to a genre that is inheritably foolish. (MS)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte NC 28236, www.deeplem.com

V/A – Global Punk Volume 1, CD

This is a nice idea, as I love hearing bands from other parts of the world, but when they all sound like whatever Vagrant Records is currently releasing, it's a downer. If nothing else, at least I know Austria and Germany have to deal with the same corny pop-punk we do. (AM)

Falcom Records, www.falcomrecords.com

V/A – If It Plays In Peoria, It Will Play Anywhere, CD

Here's an irritatingly eclectic comp ranging from country to screamo featuring bands from Peoria, Ill., or used to be from, or had a member live there for a year or something. Bands include Fed By Fiction, Planes Mistaken For Stars, Dead Like Dallas and 16 more songs. Some good, some not at all. (TK)

Thinker Thought Records, 1002 Devonshire Road, Washington, IL 61571, www.thinkerthoughtwrong.com

V/A – lowahardcore.com(pilation), CD

This is a super-cool compilation collecting songs from screamo, emo, punk and hardcore bands from Iowa. Most people wouldn't think Iowa would have a lot of good bands, but they are sorely mistaken. There are quite a few bands on here that I had heard of, but not heard, so this served as a great introduction to them. I love comps that can get you motivated enough to look for some new band's other releases. It even comes with a sticker and patch. My favorite bands on this release: Dispensing Of False Halos, In Loving Memory and Seven Days Of Samsara. I really wish this came with some info on where to get one, but I guess you'll have to hunt it down. What a shame. (KM)

www.iowahardcore.com

V/A – Kiss Or Kill, CD

Don't let the X reference fool you—this LA comp is really, really bad. Openers The Randies are so annoying they make me want to kill myself (and not in the good way), while The Dolyrots sing a ridiculous song about kicking ass like Jackie Chan (and unfortunately, it's not an Ash cover). If the mindless, tired rock 'n' roll/punk by numbers approach these bands take doesn't make you kick in your stereo, the asinine, record-scratching lyrics will. The only band that escapes with their dignity intact is The Letter Openers. This is not a valid representation of what LA has to offer; I wholeheartedly recommend *Let's Get Rid Of LA* for a glimpse at what the city is really packing. (RL)

War Room Records, P.O. Box 95-1813, Los Angeles CA, 90093-1813, www.warroomrecords.com

V/A – The Local Shakedown Vol. II: A Collection Of Colorado Independent Music, CD

Honestly, the title of this CD explains it all. This compilation features artists from Boulder, Colo., and it's not bad. It's all over the place musically as it tries to represent the whole scene, from dub to hip-hop to hardcore. Jello Biafra gives an introductory speech and sings a little ditty about Boulder. Most of the artists on the compilation are mediocre, but there are a few bands that stick out and put in a strong effort: The Breezy Porticos, Planes Mistaken For Stars and Space Team Electra. I don't think you would necessarily want this unless you were from Boulder. (EH)

Smooch Records, www.smoochrecords.com

V/A – Lonesome Recordings Volume 1, CD

This is a compilation marking Lonesome Recording's first year, ranging widely from indie rock to standard alt-rock fare. The songs by Read Yellow and The Faux are notables. Like a lot of compilations, much of it can be uninteresting; keep a finger close to the skip button. (BA)

Lonesome Recordings, PO Box 15297, Boston, MA 02215, www.lonesomerecordings.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)

Blueprint, S/T. Just about everyone has that one local band they remember from their formative musical years that really affected them. Coming of punk-rock age in Houston, I found that band in Blueprint. We sort of grew up together; when they started, they were yet another pop-punk band imitating Samiam's sound. From there they became Houston's resident emo band, even doing a split 7" with Jimmy Eat World (a phenomenal record, by the way). Those days, which this CD represents, were really Blueprint's best—they eventually devolved into Tortoise territory before calling it quits. But for a long time, these guys were my friends and my favorite band, and they played powerful, emotionally charged rock that was among the best of mid-'90s emo. Blueprint's take on the genre that varied widely by region incorporated healthy amounts of powerful indie rock (think Superchunk, Archers Of Loaf), like on "Simplicity," this EP's fourth track. Singer/guitarist Gilbert Alfaro's lyrics were introspective, but not saccharine, and just esoteric enough to where you understood what was behind the song without it being said directly. The band had moved past these songs by the time this EP came out in 1996, and the production on it leaves something to be desired. I don't think Houston-based Abridged Records, which released it, exists anymore, either, so I don't know where you would find it. Even if Blueprint gets lost in the annals of rock history, the band made an indelible impression on me, and this EP collects the songs that still resonate with me to this day.

Everything is in the air: TV On The Radio, *Desperate Youth, Bloodthirsty Babes*; Uncle Tupelo, *March 16-20, 1992*; J Church, *Society Is A Carnivorous Flower* (reviewed this issue); Pilot To Gunner, *Games At High Speeds*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

H.D.Q., You Suck. While U.S. kids were salivating over generic youth crew in the late '80s (oh, and now), the UK was putting out some of the best, under-appreciated hardcore that still holds up in talent and conviction—unlike the recent YOT pledge drive/reunion for example. Anyway, HDQ was an incredible melodic hardcore band from the UK. Three of their members later went on to join Leatherface, and you can definitely hear some of that sound here, but HDQ leaned more toward hardcore. The singer had a very melodic, American-sounding voice, comparable to Kevin Seconds or Jeff Turner from Three/Gray matter. The music was like a combination of New Model Army and Dag Nasty: lots of thick melodies, double picking and cool, intricate parts. It was sometimes difficult to pick out one guitar in Leatherface with all that was going on, but in HDQ (where Dickie was the sole guitarist), his playing is masterful, and nothing is lost by lacking a rhythm guitarist. Maybe that's due to the great rhythm section as well. You can pick out lots of cool bass parts on this album that flow well together with the drums. The music was definitely way ahead of its time, and few hardcore bands today can even play close to this ability. This album was reissued a little while back, but you should also seek out their album *Sinking* and the new Exit Condition retrospective if this stuff interests you.

Radical Shiite: Damned, *Black Album*; Stupids, *Retard Picnic*; Jerry's Kids, *Is This My World?/Kill Kill Kill*; Instead, *Proud Youth*; Exit Condition, *1988-1994*; Kill Creek, *Will To Strike*.



V/A – Macska Leves, CD

Do not listen to this alone or in the dark. This is a very experimental compilation, more performance art than music. The songs are loosely constructed noise compositions. Screams, creaks, gags, roars, bombs, whispers—nothing is left out. For real, this is scary shit and will cause nightmares. (MP)

Manufacture, www.noiseweb.com/manufacture

V/A – Metaphysics For Beginners, CD

Indie-rock comp. The highlights are Figurine and Kind Of Like Spitting. The Figurine song sounds like the Postal Service. Kind Of Like Spitting reminds me of Bright Eyes in a good way. Overall, this is a whole lotta boring. (DA) Redder Records, 1600 East Ave., #605, Rochester, NY 14610, www.redderrecords.com

V/A – No Nucleus, CD

This solid compilation showcases 18 different Long Island bands that manage to be eager and earnest no matter what the genre. It ranges from the scream of On The Might Of Princes to the rockabilly of The Devil Spades to my personal favorite, the moody synth pop of Nakatomi Plaza. (DAL) The Tone Library, 84 Valentine Ave., Glen Cove, NY 11542, www.thetonelibrary.com

V/A – Old Tyme Lemonade, CD

A collection poorly recorded songs by 20 punk/metal bands from Providence and Oleyville, R.I. There are some exceptions—one song was recorded live in Norway, and another is a pleasant acoustic number—but I could do with a three-song split 7". (DI)

Hospital Productions, c/o Dominick Fernow, 9 Carol Court, Providence, RI 02909, www.hospitalproductions.com

🔗 V/A – Rock Against Bush, CD/DVD

A CD/DVD combo whose sole purpose is to make Bush look bad succeeds with an interesting DVD featuring a documentary on the search for weapons of mass destruction and some boring anti-Bush music videos coupled with comedian David Cross poking fun at Dubya. The CD features anti-Bush tracks from the likes of Sum 41, Alkaline Trio, NOFX and Strike Anywhere (among many others). A great idea, but this reviewer can only handle so many political diatribes at one time. In a perfect world, the pol-

itics of this release would be more subtle, as the bands on the comp would sell the disc itself without having to drive home how they feel about Bush in their songs. Isn't being on a disc called *Rock Against Bush* enough? Does it really need to be jammed down my throat? The DVD portion is a nice bonus, but the entire thing is overwhelming. (DH)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3692, www.fatwreck.com, www.punkvoter.com

V/A – Sand Diego Is Burning, CD

Great comp showcasing numerous current San Diego bands and effectively showcasing the diversity of the San Diego underground. All tracks are previously unreleased, and profits go to a good cause, so buy up. Notable tracks from Black Heart Procession, Champagne Kiss, Kill Me Tomorrow, No Knife and more. (MG)

Loud + Clear Records, PO Box 5768, Santa Barbara, CA 93150, www.loudandclearrecords.com

🔗 V/A – Shite 'N' Onions Volume 1, CD

Shite 'N' Onions is a solid collection of Paddy rock from all over the world. While the indebtedness and gratitude the bands owe/show to Shane McGowan is obvious (one band, Siobhan, even goes as far as naming their band after his sister), there is some refreshing stuff here. Overall, this is a drunken blast owing a bit more to the hard rocking Flogging Molly than The Pogues (if that is possible). A lot of energy, good times and spilled Guinness went into this record, and it shows. Recommended for fans of the fore mentioned bands, as well as The Clash, Swingin' Utters and The Filthy Thieving Bastards. (RL)

V/A – Sounds Like This, CD

A nonsensical compilation of everything from not-so-great reggae to metal to folk. This is a freebie comp, presumably available at Borders. I would recommend it as an office Frisbee, but you really could hurt someone's eye with it. Better leave this one with the clerk. (RL)

Music Resource Group, www.musiciansatlantis.com

🔗 V/A – To The Bitter End, CD

This awesome international collection from Vinehell Productions in San Jose led me once again to ask a question I have pondered many times while

wearing out my Bloodstains comps with endless listens: How has eastern Europe produced so many awesome punk bands that play righteous guitar solos? Was it the oppression? The architecture? The weather? Who knows? I'm a Russophile, and I still don't. Maybe it's better as a mystery. Estonia's J.M.K.E. and Psychoterror rip it up on this record, but they are not alone. This truly wide-ranging compilation features 29 bands from a dozen countries and they all turn in fierce burners. It's a great way to get to know a bunch of new and exciting punk and hardcore bands from all over the world. Closer to home, there's a great cluster of Bay Area groups represented here, including Oakland's This Is My Fist, San Jose's Angry For Life and the Flames, and Los Dryheavers from Watsonville, down near my neck o' the woods. (DAL)

Vinehell Productions, PO Box 36131, San Jose, CA 95158, www.vinehell.com

🔗 V/A – Wheeler Avenue: A Memorial For Amadou Diallo, CD

There are so many reasons to get this comp. A part of the proceeds will go to Human Rights Watch to help fight police brutality. The first song, a live version of "Sunset On 32nd" by Strike Anywhere recorded at the Fireside Bowl is reason alone to get it. That is my new favorite song of the week. There are a few more gems here. Anti-Flag covers Mission of Burma's "That's When I Reach for My Revolver" horribly. J Church plays a song called "Off The Pigs" that doesn't sound anything like I thought it would, and The Lawrence Arms adds a live recording of "Nebraska." These guys even added the lyrics to all the songs. If you don't know who Amadou Diallo is, this would be a great reference, because while you are getting pissed at cops while reading about the incident, you can listen to 14 anti-police anthems to get you motivated to pick a fight with a cop. This is definitely the best compilation to fall into my hands in a while. (TK)

Failed Experiment Records, 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago, IL 60609, www.failedexperimentrecords.com

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4229 N. Honore Chicago IL 60613

Reviewer Spotlight: Matthew Siblo (MS)

V/A, No Alternative. We all have records we inexplicably love, even though we can't explain why. Usually, they're albums we grew up listening to and have developed a bizarre, sometimes embarrassing attachment to. It is looking with these notoriously toxic rose-colored glasses that I present and reminisce about one of my all-time favorite compilations. If you were to ask me why I loved this album so much at the tender age of 10, I could give you no conclusive reason besides the fact that Soul Asylum were involved, and, as you may recall, they were quite a big deal in 1993. They contributed a cheeky cover of Marvin Gaye's classic "Sexual Healing" that I'm pretty sure I didn't really comprehend at the time, but such is the ignorance of youth. While I played that cover out to death, my absolute favorite song was always Urge Overkill's weepy "Take A Walk." With lyrics such as "I don't pray anymore/ too many of God's children cry," I now have a slightly better understanding as to why I was always so depressed in junior high. Other standout tracks include Matthew Sweet's always uplifting "Superdeformed," Pavement's bizarre rant "Unseen Power Of The Picket Fence" and Nirvana's secret contribution of "Verse Chorus Verse." For me, *No Alternative* will always be remembered as a fleeting snapshot of a musical movement, even with the unsightly inclusion of Goo Goo Dolls and Sarah McLachlan. Worth scouring for in your favorite local used bin, I promise.

If you wanna be my lover, you have to get with: Modest Mouse, *Good News For People Who Love Bad News*; Morrissey, *You Are The Quarry*; Sonic Youth, *Daydream Nation*; Iron And Wine, *Our Endless Numbered Days*; Dios, *S/T*.

Reviewer's Spotlight: Lisa Weingarth (LW)

Blur, Parklife. Perhaps I should have gone with something more "punk" for my PP debut, but I'd be lying to myself and the rest of the world if I didn't pick a Blur album for my initial foray into reviewer-hood. I'll admit it: I'm a total Blur junkie, an Anglophile through and through, and this album converted me into the sick being I am today. Remember, if you will, the American musical landscape of 1994: Kurt Cobain had just offed himself, grunge was nearly dead, and the genre's watered-down offspring were dominating the airwaves. Enter Blur's first big American single, "Girls And Boys." A funky kick in the ass to tired old grunge, it was a proper introduction to the band's off-kilter antics, with its terribly addictive disco-esque backbeat and randy lyrics. I'm not sure how any 14-year-old at the time was able to avoid Blur's intense allure. The rest of the album gets even better. Quirky and creative through each of its 16 tracks, the album is basically a stylistic encyclopedia of post-British invasion Britpop, from the David Bowie feel of "London Loves" to Kinks-like "Tracy Jacks" to "Bank Holiday," reminiscent of the Jam. "This Is A Low" is another highlight, a spacey song featuring a luscious guitar solo by, I'll say it, the best guitarist of the '90s, Graham Coxon. And "Magic America" is one of the best tired-of-the-USA songs since The Clash. If you are even remotely curious about Britpop, or just like good music, you should check out this album.

On heavy rotation: John Prine, *In Spite Of Ourselves*; Modest Mouse, *Good News For People Who Like Bad News*; Magnetic Fields, *I, The Essential Bruce Springsteen*; !!!, *Louden Up Now*.

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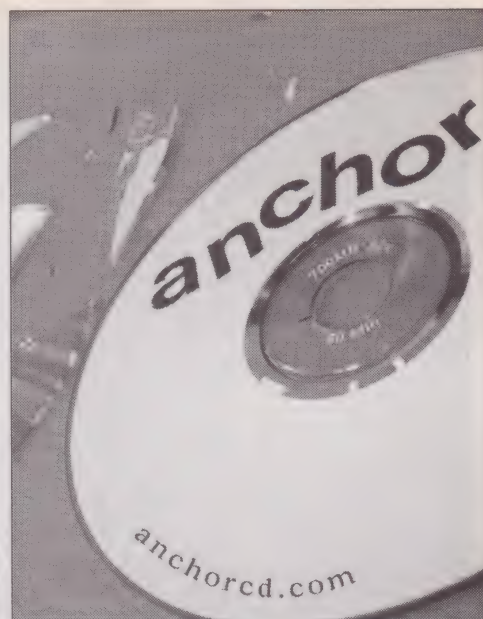
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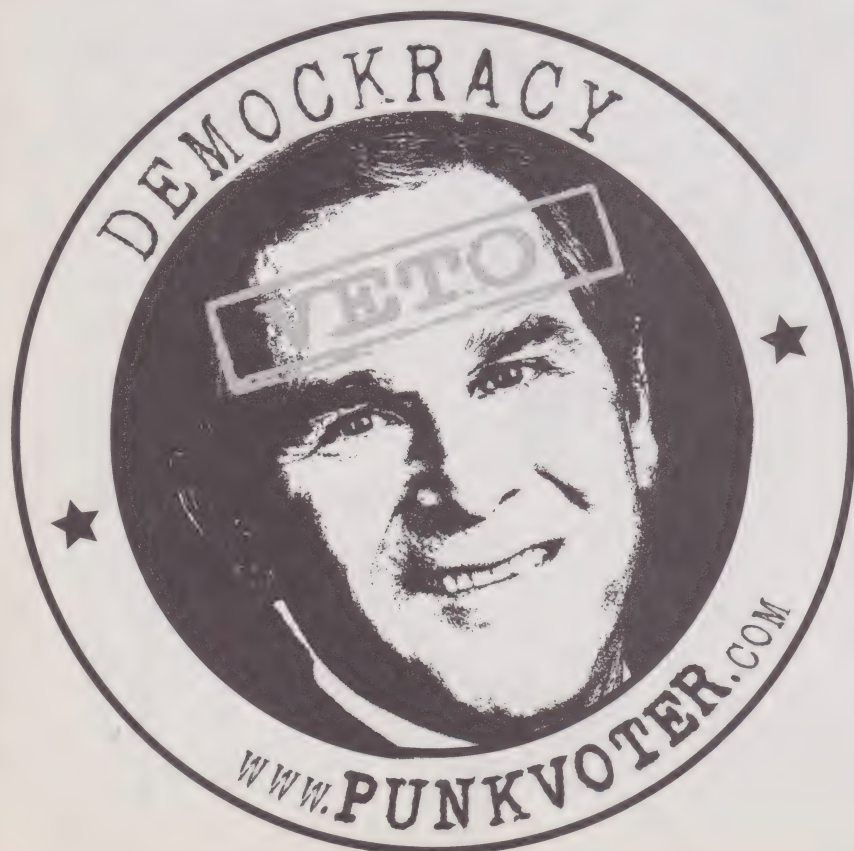
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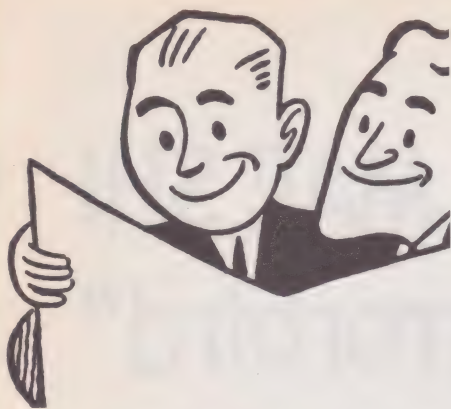


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zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Abbie Amadio (AJA), Amy Adoyzie (AA), Joe Biel (JB), AJC (AJC), Vincent Chung (VC), Lisa Groshong (LG), Dan Laidman (DAL), Brian Moss (BM), Claire Sewell (CS)

• A Bond Still Strong #2

It's amazing to see these dogmatic, male-dominated straightedge zines still emerging from excited, fresh-faced individuals with the same articles that have already appeared in dozens of zines: the scene, being excited about hardcore, door prices (being too low this time) and being true to your roots. The rest of the content is excited write-ups about records, interviews with straightedge bands, and tour diaries. The optimism and excitement here are pretty genuine, though, and it almost convinces me that this genre still being around isn't a bad thing. (JB)

\$3, Jason Kolins, 18678 80th Ave., Surrey, BC V4N 3G5, Canada

A Little Guide To Truing Bike Wheels

Ethan's zine is the big brother who doesn't yank the tools out of your hands to finish, but talks you through the entire process even when you want to freak. With quirky little drawings and clear narrative, this zine could inspire the most repair-phobic biker to grab a spoke wrench. (LG)

\$1, Ethan, PO Box 72581, New Orleans, LA 70172

Amnesty International House Of Pancakes #1

A young buck from Florida takes a decent stab at his first zine. Tristan's writing and subject matter is juvenile, yet promising. Issue one includes a critique of Christian radio dials, a mildly amusing dream interpretation involving Vin Diesel, and a father-to-son interview regarding activism and youth politics. (BM)

No price given, 1065 SE Sixth Ave., Dania, FL 33004, klausflouride66@hotmail.com

Autocaust Beef #1

Behold the coal-black-beat-style guidebook to the American apocalypse. In a furiously cathartic explosion of chaos and psychedelic poetry, Autocaust Beef captures the perfect still frame of doom and decay. Brilliance without sanity, someone needs to give this fellow a megaphone and some grenades. (BM)

No price given, www.seventenbishop.com

• Bearing Edge #2

A zine by and for drummers but with such hilarious writing and a love of music so infectious it seeps off the page, this makes great reading for anyone. Editor Klaus puts together really engaging interviews with a range of drummers from Superchunk's Jon Wurster to Shelter's Connor Logan to three guys playing in NYC subway stations. The zine reaches a sublime point of utter brilliance when he includes the questions he tried to ask Poison's Rikki Rockett (RR bowed out of the interview) along with an analysis of his own questions (for example, a relatively technical question about how digital recording tools have influenced drumming techniques gets, "Honestly, this is like asking a hamster what his opinion is on Nietzsche.") An essay by Klaus' friend Finn about learning to appreciate drummers who play more than grindcore blasts ends up being a really poignant meditation on musical maturation that most of us can identify with. Same goes with Klaus' introduction, in which he details his frequent moves and how much difficulty he has had getting a band together. A band is like a relationship, he writes: Renting a practice space is like moving in together. Buying a van, well, that's marriage. (DAL)

\$2.50, 1360 Denniston St., Third Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

Bitch #24

Lisa Jarvis' long-running and good-looking Bitch magazine makes me mad at the world. Not really intellectually stimulated from discourse, just furious. I read the article about marketing on reality television shows and decided I hate reality TV. I have come so far in life. (VC)

\$4.95, 1611 Telegraph Ave., Ste. S15, Oakland, CA 94612, www.bitchmagazine.com

• Blueprint Memory

Greg has that most enviable quality to his writing of making the every day and mundane appear completely beautiful and mystical. His eyes are cameras, and he is forever noticing the tiny things in a day and turning them inside out as personal metaphors. This issue finds him on "vacation" back in Arizona with his mother. He deals mostly with the transit of memories and how easily they are distorted in our mind's eye. Greg seems to be in a kind of emotional limbo in this issue, and the Arizona desert provides the perfect backdrop. By the time he returns home at the zine's conclusion, it seems that all he encountered was just a distant mirage, and he is left to try and develop the slightly thin negatives of his life into words. (CS)

\$3, PO Box 5134, Raleigh, NC 27650-5134, greg_lindquist@hotmail.com

Blurt: Other Stories #1

"I believe in fortune cookies," Lew Houston writes. "They mostly had to do with romance or adventure, the two things I like best." Sticking with his favorite subjects, Houston's 28 essays chronicle love sickness from Carbon-dale to Columbus. It's entertaining—at first. Blurt's best essay laments Houston's proliferation of "crap records." (LG)

\$2, c/o Lew Houston, 135 Wapalopen Rd., Nescopec, PA 18635, Vinylagogo.com

Citizine #4

I was expecting the same-old-same-old when I saw the cover, but Citizine balances its interviews and political articles very well compared to similar zines. Their conversational interview style is also better than most, as seen in the interview with Klaus Flouride of the Dead Kennedys. I'd recommend this. (CS)

\$3, T. Dubbs Enterprises, 2513 West Fourth St., Los Angeles, CA 90057, www.citizinemag.com

Citizine #5

This issue includes interviews with Tommy Ramone (Tom Erdelyi), New Bomb Turks' Eric Davidson and the Descendents' Bill Stevenson. Creator Mark Prindle has a very easygoing/gushing interview style and a great sense of humor that makes most all of the CD/DVD reviews worth reading. (AJA)

\$3.95, 2513 West Fourth St., Los Angeles, CA 90057, www.citizinemag.com

Crash #3

Hodge-podge of rather flatly written and presented essays on street medics at globalization protests, female genitalia, drug laws, the commoditization of dissent, and international affirmative action. (DAL)

\$1.50, Shay, PO Box 20455, Newark, NJ 07101, www.crashzineonline.net

Dagger #34

While not a local magazine, dagger suffers when taken out of Portland. It seems to require vast knowledge of the densely populated indie music scene. Luckily, Tim has that knowledge, and he likes to share. Indie pop eats itself in an implosion of rare factoids and obscure interviews. (AJC)

\$2., c/o Tim Hinely, PO Box 820102, Portland, OR 97282-1102

Die, The, Vol. 3, No. 1

I like this newspaper/zine more with each issue. This issue features a long article on the Internet and the destruction of solitude. Great reading. There are also some book and zine reviews and letters from readers. Try The Die. It's good stuff. (CS)

Free (but send stamps), Red Roach Press, PO Box 764, College Park, MD 20740, redroachpress@yahoo.com

• Dog's Breakfast #1

This is one the best zines I've read in a long time. Not an easy thing to say, but Jason has written a zine that, while being heavily layered, still feels very fresh. He writes smart, short essays on iPod, online profiles of famous gay men and an homage to a street corner. Dog's Breakfast is a per-zine, but one that places the personal solidly within a community through memories and a fat dose of history. As if this were not enough, he finishes with "Beautiful Young Soldiers Who Have Died in Iraq." What, at first, seems like an interesting exercise, using Walt Whitman's Civil War poetry to write about the deaths of soldiers in Iraq, becomes a work of art. It is a sad reminder of all that is tragically lost to war. Recommended. (AJC)

\$2., Jason, 2617 Emerson Ave. S., Apt A, Minneapolis, MN 55408, jrwbrt@yahoo.com

Drunken Master #7

A comic about a Japanese boxer's sibling rivalry that fuels him throughout a match. It seems unfinished, both in craft and story, but the sheer grit resonates from the pages. With personal writing and wonderful interviews with The Immortal Lee County Killers II and Social Distortion. (VC)

\$5, 3324 Rowena Ave., #A, Los Angeles, CA 90027, drunkenmasterzine@sbcglobal.net

East Village Inky #23

Quite possibly one of the cutest zines ever, this is a long running series from a 39-year-old mother of two (one of which with 3 thumbs) about her funny little intimacies and her family. Always cute and charming. (JB)

\$2, Ayun Holliday, PO Box 22754, Brooklyn, NY 11202, www.ayunholliday.com

Fanorama #27

Twelve years of Fanorama, and somehow they just keep getting better. Every issue is a new opportunity to be blown away by REB's faggy brilliance. This time the planets did align themselves just so. Thus, the entire Fano 27 came together with an amazing synergy. 3-D cover? Can't beat it. (AJC)

\$5/free to prisoners, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI, 02905, www.fanorama.tk

Finding Datura Report, The #2

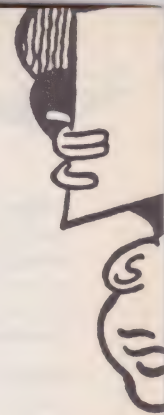
The Finding Datura Report is a review zine celebrating the creepy underbelly of DIY. Good interviews with spooky bands like The Von Dooms and The Dresden Dolls, and serious leanings toward the dark side set it apart from similar projects. (AJC)

\$2., Rob Monroe, 512 Lincoln Way W., Mishawaka, IN 46544, www.findingdatura.cjb.net

George W. Bush Coloring Book

A collection of comical and disturbing quotes from our President, which you may reflect upon while coloring in hokey pictures of him. The footnotes and sources are included as well, which makes for some pretty entertaining moments with your crayons. (JB)

\$8.95, Garrett County Press, 828 Royal St., #248, New Orleans, LA 70116, www.gcpress.com



👁 Glossolalia – Bike Like You Mean It #4

Sarah Conrady gracefully chronicles her epic pedal-and-chain journeys spanning from Washington to Arizona, wittily splicing in bits of politics and touchingly honest self-realizations along the way. Her poetically spun tales of punk soul-searching, bloodthirsty desert warthogs, perpetually flat tires and vast western scenery make a great read for those looking to invoke their romantic adventuring sides. From page one to the final sentence, my eyes couldn't take themselves elsewhere. Sarah's fluid and pensive writing is equally addictive and enchanting. I greatly look forward to further inspirations, hilarities and everyday gear shifts from this free-spirited, blooming young author. A-fuckin'-plus. (BM)

\$2 or cookies, 5711 NE 24th, Portland, OR 97211, enormajean@hotmail.com

Go Metric! #18

Finally, a humor zine that's actually funny! The folks at Go Metric! are having fun, and it shows. There's a simultaneous review of the Daredevil and Scooby-Doo movies and profiles of old SCTV characters. Music reviews and band interviews round it out, loading it with infectious pop goodness. (AJC) \$2., 801 Eagles Ridge Rd., Brewster, NY 10509, gogometric@yahoo.com

Green Anarchy #16

Alternately inspiring and bombastic, philosophical and practical, Green Anarchy contains a how-to manual for "rewilding" that includes tips for destroying surveillance cameras, news of Earth Liberation Front actions, essays by radical green heavyweights like John Zerzan, Rene Riesel, and Bob Black, and a culinary contemplation of roadkill skunk. (LG) \$4, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440, www.greenanarchy.org

👁 Harbinger #5

CrimethInc.'s anarchist's newspaper is made up of melodramatic articles denouncing, of course, all that is capitalist society. It does make for an interesting read, even when its ideology of a work-free, government-free, good-hearted community driven society is far-fetched. Anarchistic utopia is about as plausible as flying horses and the fountain of youth—wonderful to reflect on, but forever out of reach. They promote both individualism and the need to develop and act with a social conscience well, but seriously, don't you know most everyone is lazy? The masses won't dedicate their workless free time to starting a revolution, but rather drinking Budweiser and watching cable. Sounds like utopia to me. (AJA)

Free, PO Box 1963, Olympia WA 98507-1963, www.crimethinc.com

Hasta Cuando?

In a special Bush/Cheney 2004 issue, the bilingual Chicago-based political zine Hasta Cuando? bitch-slaps the (until when?) president and his cronies via rants, news stories and cartoons. Reviews, poetry and articles bring an angry, oppression-oriented slant to weighty subjects like sex trafficking and public school policy. (LG)

No price given, 1840 S. Racine, Chicago IL 60608, hastacuado@postmark.net

Holy Shit Fanzine #3

While not much to look at, Holy Shit is a fanzine very much devoted to the Detroit scene and includes some in-depth band interviews. The "Lives in Transit" section is probably the most interesting bit, made up of e-mail contributions on a common theme of transition. A great idea that I hope continues. (AJC)

\$2., c/o Eric Scobie, 2360 Mapledale, Ferndale, MI 48220, xpamajakid@hotmail.com

Hot Sex #1

From kooky sex laws to sex tips to porn reviews, this zine gives a humdrum account of all of the above. Surprisingly, it is very conservative, considering Madison (where the zine originates) is a much more "sexually liberated" city than these girls let on. Reads more like missionary. (AJA)

\$2/\$1 + stamps, PO Box 2142, Madison, WI 53701, madwizpunk42@hotmail.com, 18 And Over Only

Hot Sex #2

Slightly pornographic, slightly informational, and all in the good name of gettin' your rocks off. A look into one adult mail-order catalogue, comparison of '70s porn versus contemporary smut and a "how-to" on handjob. Eighteen and over please, because it's against the law. Everyone under age has no real interest in sex anyway. (AA)

\$1. Dusty & Misty, PO Box 2142, Madison, WI, 53701-2412, madwizpunk42@hotmail.com

I Never Knew What It Was Like To Lose Until The End Of October #1

Some poetry punches you in the gut. Some picks the reader up with wings like pegasus to soar over some fucking fantasy land. This short collection is one of those nontoxic ghost farts whose wispieness disappears into thin air. Sorry, but you can't hide lack of substance behind vague artiness.

50 cents or trade (mixtape/art/letters/zines), thisonedisaster@yahoo.com

Impact Press #50

The 50th issue of Impact Press bulges with solidly researched articles on sociopolitical issues including gay marriage, Costco, Janet Jackson's boob and puppy mills. Keith Knight cartoons, a great Little Mermaid satire and fake ads bring much-needed levity to the relentless coverage of the world's impending "utter catastrophe." (LG)

\$2, PMB 361, 10151 University Blvd., Orlando, FL 32817 www.impactpress.com

👁 Keep Loving, Keep Fighting #3

Hope put together a zine about her namesake, to create an inspirational collection of stories from kids who lived them. It's about "things they've learned, overcome, grew from." From gut-churning, visceral manifestos to a short essay on getting over one's shyness, it reads like one of your friend's diaries—except without all the griping, depression and sullen introspections. They are actual letters to Hope about their trials and tribulations, and within them there's an unspoken understanding that unknowing readers have to fill in themselves. The most comforting part of this is that you know

exactly what they're talking about anyway. There's even poetry, and it's actually readable (and enjoyable.) (AA)

\$2. Hope, 71 Hackleboro Rd., Canterbury, NH 03224

Kimosabe #1

A wandering, directionless personal zine that still manages to pull off solid, interesting and attention-grabbing writing. Simple typewriter layouts about hanging out, smoking pot and watching TV, and it's somehow quite enthralling. How does he do that? (JB)

\$1, Marc Parker, 2000 NE 42nd Ave., #221 Portland, OR 97213, www.zinethug.com

Kiss Machine #8

Some great contributions ("My Megatron" and the Helena Kavarström photos), some decent ("Our Game") and a few poor ("Paint Can Robots") round out this literary magazine. Overall, the lack of obscure avant garde and abundance of straight-forward playfulness (centering around Babies & Robots) is a refreshing breath. (VC)

\$4, PO Box 108, Station P, Toronto, ON, M5S 2S8, Canada, www.kissmachine.org

Les Carnets De Rastapopoulos #4

This reminds me of the reports I cribbed from the encyclopedia as a kid. The zine uses charmingly random illustrations to illuminate pointless histories of a guy who believed in a giant hole through the earth and a long-dead astronomer, plus a nearly redeeming swoon about '80s Czech pop music. (LG) Free, 101-4906 Main St., Vancouver, BC, V5W 2R3, Canada

Letters From The War Years #1

Toronto-based writer, spoken-word artist, activist and now zinester Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha created this "queer/trans POC anti-war" zine to document the anti-war movement, primarily in Toronto and New York. It is a valuable primary source full of correspondence that sketches a dire portrait of a movement torn by internal divisions and emotional paralysis. (DAL)

\$3, Walmer Post Office, 360A Bloor St. West, P.O. Box 19049, Toronto, ON M5S 3C9, Canada

Life In The Bike Lane #1

A 60-pager dedicated entirely to the pros of cycling. While Dan is clearly a gifted writer, his zine is boringly subjective. I'm a car-less bicycle guy, but choosing not to drive isn't exactly kicking heroin. In the punk community, you're preaching to the choir about eliminating soccer moms and SUVs. (BM)

\$2, 1709 S. Jen Tilly Lane, #91, Tempe, AZ 85281, lifeinthebikelane@yahoo.com

Measure

Measure compiles indie rock coverage from 2003 into one thick volume. Interviews and reviews from widely-read sources such as Skyscraper, Punk Planet, and Devil in the Woods seem redundant and excessively indulgent. Perfect for those ADD'd hipsters who hawked their collections for smack, but still want to be "with it." (VC)

\$7.95 to 216 Columbia Street, #2A, Brooklyn, NY 11231, measuremag@yahoo.com

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little eye (👁) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!



My Fat Irish Ass! / Yellow Baby

My Fat Irish Ass! # (-)5

There are some standards (zine and show reviews) and originals (comics and drawings), but c'mon, Family Circus cartoons with altered captions? They take up 13 out of 34 pages. They are, for the most part, infantile and not very funny. Mostly they're an idea that's been done before—and better. (AJC) \$2., PO Box 65391, Washington, DC 20035, omelaine@starpower.net

Myxine #16

The fact that this zine reads backward is a bit annoying, but the content is otherwise good. Standout pieces include "My Life in Color," "Philadelphia" and a biography of Paul Robeson. There are also a few interviews and information about the Pensacola zine scene, among lots of other stuff. (CS) \$2, 309 N. Sixth Ave., Pensacola, FL 32501, myxine@hotmail.com

Negative Space Vacant Expanse #2

It's never a good sign when a zine includes a research project written for school that starts with the disclaimer "We are too lazy to edit this, so sorry if you find any mistakes." The rest feels similarly tossed off and unfocused, although a series of pro-bicycle stories shows promise. (DAL) No price given, 4902 Umatilla, Boise, ID, 83709, www.geocities.com/negativespacezine

Nero Fiddled While Rome Burned, #4

This rambling assemblage of conspiratorial anti-Bush quotations will make even the most stridently leftist denizen's eyes glaze over from the confluence of a jumbled layout with trite, temple-throbbing rants. (DAL) 3 stamps/trade, Jacob David, PO Box 3050, Eureka, CA 95502

Nero Fiddled While Rome Burned #6

Is it possible to criticize our president and actually come off dumber than our imbecile in office? This hodge podge of anti-Bush propaganda reads like a 14-year-old's temper tantrum filled with CrimethInc-esque gravitas, recycled sloganeering and desperate conspiracy theories. Get a brain, morans [sic]! (VC) 3 stamps to Jacob David, PO Box 3050, Eureka, CA 95502

No-Na-Mé

Dubbed "a political zine to expose this unjust system," it reads much like the journal of a disenfranchised youth: full of clichés and lacking in real insight. Yes, yes, the Bush administration is uncool, but will cheesy poetry solve anything? (AA) \$2, PO Box 12065, Honolulu, HI 96828

OJ Killed Elvis #8

OJ Killed Elvis recounts a sordid tale of blackouts, drugs, drunken arrests, theft, numerous assaults and a restraining order that is tragic to read and totally exhausting. And that's only the prelude. Three chapters, an interlude and an epilogue later, you'll be glad to read that Mike's doing all right. (AJC) \$2., Mike Croft, 109 Chenango St., Apt. 3, Birmingham, NY 13901, ojkilledelvis@hotmail.com

☞ Please Kill Yourself #4

Jay Debauchery writes for my university's paper, but he saves his best stuff for his zine. There are some funny e-mails from pissed off AFI fans that speak for themselves. He and a few contributors also do record and show reviews. I'd call them "unreviews," though, as few of them are positive or constructive. He doesn't mince words or pander to the bands in the scene, and his sarcasm is actually refreshingly funny. (Or should that be "disgustingly funny" to go along with the zine's title?). He also gripes about the Casualties, which is a good change considering the praise that gets heaped on them elsewhere. (CS)

No price given, 630 E. 14th St., Houston, TX 77008, pkymag@hotmail.com

Practical Anarchy #14

The rants here offer a diverse taste of the world of anarchy. From sharp pieces by a "financial journalist by day, anarchist by night" to a trite "article" about anarchism and Southern culture that had little to do with Dixie and more with white guilt and hip anarchist buzzwords. (VC) \$5, Alternative Media Project, PO Box 3123, Arlington, VA 22203, www.practicalanarchy.org

Propaganda #3

Musico-political zine that schools us on the U.K. punkview. An awesome call out to stop purchasing Converse shoes, as they have been bought out by Nike and their sweatshoppin' policies. Interviews with German band Ingo, Kevin Seconds, Dillinger Escape Plan, Strike Anywhere and Anti-Flag. These blokes have got it goin' on. (AA) \$3, £1. 279 Main St., Calverton, Nottingham, NG14 6LT, UK, propagandazine@hotmail.com

Radix #1

Another socio-political newsprint zine calling for "revolution." The "look and feel" begins with an image of Governor Bush with a monkey body taking a shit on the globe. Yup, they're anti-capitalism, -authoritarianism, -patriotism, -mainstream media. So, what's new? Ultimately, still a good start for a zine produced by a collective. (AA) No price given, www.radixcollective.com

Rancid News #6

This 112-page fanzine features a dash of activism, lots of blurry band photos and reviews. The lengthy interviews feel like endless, inane conversations culled from reality TV footage. A heavily disclaimed "Information for Action" section has interesting—though not terribly useful—London-centric takes on hitching, squatting, flyposting, shoplifting and getting arrested. (LG) £1, PO Box 382, 456-458 The Strand, London WC2R 0DZ, UK, www.mrzone.co.uk

Rated Rookie #6

This slick Brooklyn hipster magazine seems like it should be better. Many of the assembled short, nonfiction pieces are built on high-concept foundations—interviewing a student barber while getting a haircut, printing responses to their Craig's List roommate ad—but the writing is unexceptional throughout. (DAL) \$3, 562 Park Place #3, Brooklyn, NY 11238, www.ratedrookie.com

Rise And Fall, The #1

A zine detailing the San Pedro, Calif., scene. The story of how a handful of skaters surreptitiously built a skate park beneath an overpass in inspiring in a twisted Oprah-esque sense. Interviews with Toys That Kill, 400 Blows and Killer Dreamer. As far as scene zines go, this one is pretty dope. (AA) \$1.50, PO Box 1794, San Pedro, CA 90733-1794, www.theriseandfall.com

☞ S.C.A.L.P.

This is a dissection of Dan's experiences and friends analyzing the concepts of finding general happiness. The writing is straight-forward and slightly literary, but more focused on the topics at hand than twisting a good literary device. Story topics include a friend who is forced into the navy instead of becoming a writer, a new acquaintance who just got out of jail and squandered a fortune, Dan's less than stellar time at a party, being propositioned for sex by a wealthy man and getting punished for prank calls in grade school. On the whole, I feel like it needs more conclusions, reflections and answers, but does anyone have answers to happiness? Maybe it still would help some people to hear Dan's musings and stories. (JB)

\$2, Dan W., 1709 S. Jentilly Ln., #91, Tempe, AZ 85281, lifeinthebikelane@yahoo.com

Shuttle Bus, Vol. 2 Issue 1

Mr. Dustin Kratovich writes a mish-mash zine filled with a Lord of the Yum-Yum interview, a lesson in French, silly one-page cartoons, a story on Wolf Eyes and an account from behind the picket line. All in all, Dustin puts out an interesting read for the casual observer. (AA) \$2, PO Box 7814, Ann Arbor, MI 48107, www.casanovaletemptations.net

Skyscraper #16

The cover for this issue, done by seripop, is the best of recent issues. There are the standard interviews with bands like the Decemberists, The Thermals and The Icarus Line, to name a few. Also a great, unexpected piece on the upcoming election that ties punk and politics together better than similar articles I've seen. (CS) \$5, SPO Box 4432, Boulder, CO 80306, www.skyscraperamagazine.com

Strait #8

It's the "Summer Fun Issue," which includes a beautifully understated cartoon about a boy who can't talk to girls, an ode to the Italian actress Gina Lollobrigida and an exploration of the connection of masculinity and car ownership. Lane produces a pretty awesome boycentric zine without all of the macho posturing. (AA) \$1, Lane Van Ham, 1141 E. Adams #6, Tucson, AZ 85719

Take On Your Heroes #3

A nicely designed rock 'n' roll rag, with interests in the past & present, off to a rock solid start. Well thought out, fair and balanced writing. A well-needed kick in the pants that music zines needed for awhile. (JB) Free, PO Box 985395, Atlanta, GA 30359, toyh@comcast.net

Three Stories #1

A collection of meandering fiction that didn't do much for me. It seems to take pride in the twists and shock factor, but that only made me less interested in this ultra-male perspective. (JB) John Hutchens, 166 Valleybrook Rd. Elkin, NC 28621, johnhutchens@gmail.com

WAV #1

With its glossy cover and newsprint insides, WAV is more an independent magazine than a zine. Beyond that, it doesn't bother to try and fit wholly into any category. Many genres of music, from independent and more mainstream artists, are represented. Smart politics and informative articles fill it out nicely. (AJC) \$2., WAV Magazine, 3253 S. Beverly Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90034, www.wavmag.com

What's Up Bra? #1

The title of this zine is clever, but somewhat reinforces the gender binary, which I think is the thing What's Up... is trying to elude. It's a good first effort, though, and the girls who do it have great ideas. There are some interviews, veg recipes and book reviews. (CS) \$3, 3306 Lemp, St. Louis, MO 63118, whatsupbra@hotmail.com

☞ What's Up Bra? #2

It's nice to see this zine improving the second time around. I like their personal pieces best, including one that contemplates what it means to be engaged in a country that does not afford marriage rights to all, one about hitchhiking and one about a friend's suicide. There's also a piece on the upcoming election, a queer youth center, a crossword puzzle and more recipes and reviews. What's Up... is political and sassy without taking itself too seriously, which is nice to see. I hope this zine sticks around. (CS) \$3, 3306 Lemp, St. Louis, MO 63118, whatsupbra@hotmail.com

World Domination Through Dumpster Diving #17

Oh dear, those crazy anarchist kids and their crazy revolutionary ways. Sprinkled with CrimethInc. propaganda, stories about how the local government is fucking with their shi, and how-to guides on wheatpasting and random acts of sabotage. (AA) \$2, Free to prisoners, WOTDD, c/o Overground, PO Box Pensacola, FL 32591, www.overground.info

Writers' Grind #4

Collaborative zine with emo-kid poetry and prose, interview with Against Me!, essays about home recording and animal rights, and a nonsensical rant against the Punk Voter project. (DAL) \$2, Chris Smith, 15403 S.W. 74th Place, Miami, FL 33157

Yellow Baby #1

Very impressive debut for this collection of short comics, some stand-alone and others apparently the beginning of longer serials. The art is quite distinctive and quite good, with ordinary folks rendered in a grotesque but expressive way and some of the most creative lettering I've seen. (DAL) \$3.95, Alternative Comics, 503 NW 37th Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32609-2204

Yes, we review zines. Send them along to:

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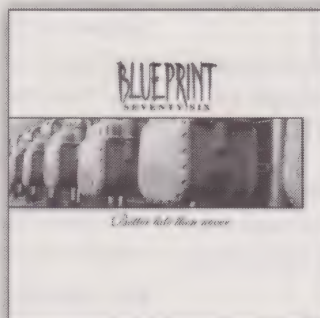
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EDITED BY JOE MENO

BORN TO ROCK an interview with author Todd Taylor

Todd Taylor first discovered punk rock by accident. Not accidentally, but by a terrible car accident that sent Taylor, then 15, barreling through the windshield, over a median, and into opposing traffic. Luckily, a trucker, seeing the crash, blocked the oncoming lanes, saving his life a second time that day. Pat DeLuca, Taylor's friend and the driver of the vehicle, was not so lucky.

Recovering from exhaustive wounds, and angered by the loss of his friend, Taylor began to search for music that could make sense of the terrible grief he was feeling. The Circle Jerks and Minor Threat seemed right to Taylor.

This amazing story is recounted as the first essay in Taylor's new book, *Born to Rock*, a veritable who's who of collected interviews and intelligent short features, reintroducing us to the saving power punk rock. It's a subject Taylor knows intimately, having written for the now-defunct *Flipside* and an editor at the punk rock mag *Razorcake*.

Published by Gorsky Press, an independent start-up that he helps manage, Taylor, like many other indie writers, is borrowing much from the world of punk music in the book's creation: self-publishing, self-promoting, and touring across the states to read to live audiences.

After having the chance to tour with him up and down the West Coast last December, we recently talked about *Born to Rock* and why writing about this kind of music still matters.

In *Born to Rock*, it's clear how much you've come to admire the punk bands you're interviewing. Is the idea of punk music still important, or has it become so corporate that the idea has lost its meaning?

This is something that Sean Carswell, the other editor at *Razorcake*, and I have been having long discussions about. The current music that I enjoy that was spawned from the initial waves of punk is so different in content and intention than its predecessors. Shit, I still call it punk, but it's a loose noun. There is a huge body of fast, aggressive, and loud music that's being made right now. A lot of it is also intelligent, witty, and thought provoking. Take Toys That Kill or Dillinger Four: If you say they've been corporatized and lost their meaning, I'd say *fuck you, dude*. These bands can go toe-to-toe against any band in the pantheon. But so much of punk rock has been put in these very sectioned-off glass jars of genres and timeframes and locations. I don't know if "punk rock" is the best word to describe what's going on, but I'm comfortable with it being nameless.

What's the interview you're most proud of in the book?

MEET SOFT SKULL PRESS *Soft Skull Press out of Brooklyn, NYC, is one of the most recognized independent publishers operating today. With great books like *Fortunate Son*, the blockbuster *Bush* biography, *Get Your War On*, by Punk Planeteer David Rees, and many others covering politics, fiction, and poetry, this indie press has the imagination and fearlessness of the best independent record labels of the 1980s. Here's a look at three new releases from their current list.*

SKELS Maggie Dubris

Maggie Dubris' novel, *Skels*, relates the tale of pseudo-hippie Orlie Breton in the summer of 1979 as she works in various sections of Manhattan as an EMT and briefly, on a morgue truck. The book focuses on an EMT's lesser-known, and easily-forgotten rescues: the homeless (or the "skels"), the addicts, and the hermits. Orlie becomes fixated on a creepy, guitar playing, fugitive: a homeless albino who is the focus of Dubris' bizarre, under-the-bridge world.

The novel is clearly the prose of a poet, and reads like the first novel that it is. Dubris held my interest to the point where I was desperate to get to the end—only then, I thought, would I be able to make sense of the story. The end, however, made

no more sense than the rest of the book. The reader is left wondering about the connection between the narrator and the characters and their briefly-connected worlds. In many ways, readers look to books to find redemption—questions answered, riddles solved—yet, at the end of *Skels*, one only finds more mystery and more confusion.

Dubris is able to successfully harness a comedic authority in her prose, however. Her depictions of Weenie, the drag queen, and of Neal, Orlie's acid dropping "sometimes boyfriend" are especially memorable. I also applaud Dubris' ability to handle her many characters—we are constantly being introduced to new personalities, and Dubris makes the transitions flawlessly. Other highlights include some blood and gore accompanied by a realistic look into the world of a city ambulance driver.

In a larger sense, the book wants to draw a parallel between the geniuses of the past (Jack London, Whitman, Rimbaud—all of whom give voice to the marginalized and misunderstood) and to her street crazies of New York City. Dubris wants us to recognize the enormous potential that lies in the forgotten people of our society. This is an ambitious, maybe even idealized vision (although the idea of the

homeless as visionaries themselves is a bit clichéd) that remains unrealized, despite the effort made by Dubris

—Emily Schambra

THE PORNOGRAPHER'S POEM Michael Turner

At its worst, pornography is the secret suggestive element of all modern entertainment; from television to film to the Internet to video games, we as Americans are constantly lost within our own fantasy lives, pornographic or otherwise. Is it simple corporate coercion, or are we somewhat responsible for the all-consuming dream lives we lead, easily ignoring the minor troubles and misapprehension of the rest of the world? Michael Turner's new novel, *The Pornographer's Poem*, at its best moments, seems to be negotiating an answer.

With a brilliant, tightly-compressed structure that alternates between ongoing interviews, screenplay excerpts, characters' class notes and letters, and conventional narrative scenes, the writing is tense and intelligent, describing dramatic moments that are sometimes soft, tender, and dreamy, sometimes ruthlessly obscene.

The story begins in 1974 Vancouver with the arrival of Ms.

The Davey Tiltwheel one. I'd been Davey's friend for years, but when we did that interview, I learned more about him in an hour than I had in the year previous. Anyone who had to face either clown school or continue punk rock, they've got good stories to tell. He also has one of the largest hearts of any human being I've ever known.

What about your worst interview ever? What went wrong?

Joe Queer wanted an interview and when I showed up, he actively didn't give a shit. I followed him from the dressing room to a hallway, through the venue, and ended up on the street, with him getting into someone's car. He dodged my questions. It was like he wanted to tell me stuff that had nothing to do with my questions. It was aggravating. And he contacted us for the interview. I've had a 99.95 percent success rate, so fuck it.

Do you try to find a balance in the subjects you're interviewing?

What I've been trying to do lately is attempting to find the humanity in the people I'm interviewing. I try to draw out things that almost anyone reading the interview can relate to and understand—like shitty jobs, the obstacles they had to overcome to do what they love, that type of stuff. I'm not making the interviews punk-specific, but punk-friendly, so you don't have to know a bunch of minutia to understand what a band's talking about, but if you're a fan of their music, you're rewarded as a reader.

How do you avoid simply glamorizing the sometimes infantile side of punk rock?

It's all a balance. I think the best interviews aren't necessarily the funniest ones or the immediately flashy ones, but ones that reflect the true personalities of the people who are being interviewed. Asking Howard Zinn to tell fart jokes probably wouldn't work. Asking Smogtown about the existential void probably wouldn't work either. Some bands are quiet; some are full of

nutjobs or drunks. I like jokes, I do a lot of stupid things, but, man, I've experienced some fucked-up things in my life—as most people have—and I want to see if we can match the fart jokes up with life-changing experiences. If I can capture both in an interview, that's awesome. It keeps us from having sticks up our asses, but it also doesn't discount the fact that most bands have a lot at stake, emotionally, physically, and financially.

Why did you guys decide to create your own press?

Sean Carswell and Felizon Vidad officially started Gorsky together in 1998 to put out Sean's first novel. At the beginning of 2004, we've integrated Gorsky and *Razorcake* together and we're in the process of becoming a non-profit business. Why start a new press? Because it's little surprise to us that major publishing houses aren't hugely interested in honest books by blue collar workers. This is DIY. We can't go off spouting in a magazine that bands should do it themselves and then start shopping out our own books to other people. So we decided to really learn how to put books together and how to put them out. Sean led the charge. Right now, we have eleven books out with four or five in stages of production for release in the next two years.

As a writer, what are you borrowing from the tenets of punk rock?

What have I taken from punk? That I don't need to be a "professional," I just have to work hard, stick my neck out, make a plan that breaks even at worst, and do the best I can. DIY book touring isn't exactly new, but it's definitely gaining steam and it's getting more organized. To me, it's reminiscent of punk rock in America in the early '80s; it's a neat feeling, knowing that you're treading on ground that only has a few footprints in front of you. ☺

Find *Born to Rock* at www.razorcake.com/gorskypress

Penny Singleton, seventh grade teacher, who turns her class into a filmmaking collective. Her passion for celluloid sparks a substantial relationship between the narrator, who remains unnamed, and his best friend and budding art student, Nettie. Moving from the excitement of making their first films to their very first attempts at sex, the two teenagers discover the adult world of pornography as it exists around them: hiding in their parent's briefcases and discarded in ditches by neighbors. The two characters, not completely innocent, begin to use film as a way to understand their newfound sexuality, and soon their work attracts the attention of the adult world, which forces the couple deeper and deeper into greed, drugs, and ultimately death.

Though the ending somewhat undercuts the book's dramatic build, *The Pornographer's Poem*, when it is at its best, closely follows the lives of its very human characters and exactly invokes writer Angela Carter's notion, stated as Nettie's art school notes directly in the text, that pornography, when used properly, can call into question the inequalities inherent in the way the world is organized: "Sexual relationships between men and women always render the nature of social relations in the society and will form a cri-

tique of those relations, even if that is not the intention of the pornographer." —Joe Meno

BOTTOMS UP: WRITING ABOUT SEX Various Authors

I spent last weekend in Michigan visiting my 92-year-old, God-fearing grandmother. She lives in a retirement home and aside from Grape Juice and Cheese Hour or rowdy games of Gin Rummy with her elderly cohorts, there isn't much to do except read. Having forgotten my copy of *War and Peace* (or whatever it is she expects me to be reading), I was left with *Bottoms Up: Writing About Sex*. One night, after a 4:30 dinner, Grandma asked, "What's that book about?"

After thoughtful hesitation, I replied, "It's about relationships." I'm grateful that she doesn't ask me to elaborate. I'm not lying to her exactly—this book is, in fact, exclusively about relationships, just not the kind of liaisons you'd want your grandma to know you're reading about.

Bottoms Up is your typical collection of erotic tales; the stories include a sado-masochistic couple, ambiguously gendered characters, and fetishes to spare. The press release boasts that the book is an "unrepentant search for sexual intensity and intellectual fulfillment." It's a statement that reminds me of that

scene in *Boogie Nights* when Jack Horner, the pornographer played by Burt Reynolds, confesses his desire to create pornography with a real plot—he wants the audience to stay for his entire movie, even after they've climaxed. I contend that when you're dealing with scenes of hardcore pornography, the "plot" may undoubtedly be lost amongst the smut. Such is the case with most, but not all, of the stories that make up this collection.

Victoria Brownworth's "Stella" and Sharon Waschler's "To the Marrow" held my attention because these stories included characters that the reader could care about. On the other hand, Shoshana von Blankensee's story "Billy" left me pondering whether or not using butter as a lubricant would cause some kind of genital infection.

What is great about this collection is the writing itself—sharp, funny, informal—so that although some of the stories themselves may leave you wishing for a little more development among the characters, the language is natural and draws you in with its confidential tone. Perhaps, in the end, writing about sex in a way that is new or engaging is much more difficult than actually just doing it. —Emilt Schambra

Soft Skull Press is online at www.softskullpress.com

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full-length CD
out 8.24.04

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— Cititzenrobot.com

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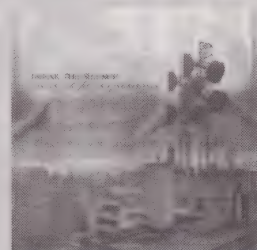


↳ SUB CITY ↲

WHO SAID ALL PUNK SOUNDS THE SAME?

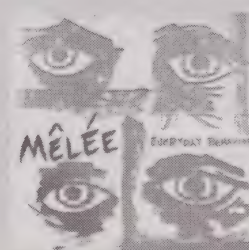


AVENGED SEVENFOLD
Waking the Fallen WARNER
"Seamlessly melds the epic mysticism and melody of vintage metal with startling, full-throttle punk grooves and shrieks..." - Los Angeles Times

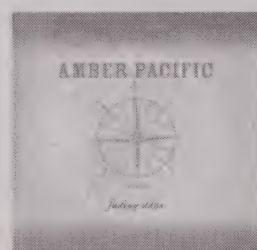


BREAK THE SILENCE
Near Life Experience WARNER
Chicago's Break The Silence are a melodic fusion of punk rock aggression and blistering metal.

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AMBER PACIFIC
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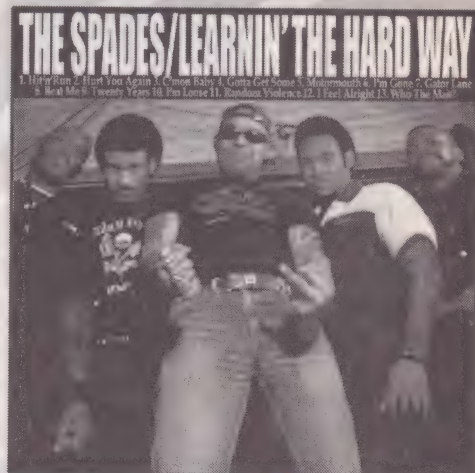
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see also

Where to find more information
about this issue's features.

interviewed this issue:

Against Me!

The fine against me is online at
www.againstme.net

Their newest album, *As The Eternal Cowboy*,
is available from Fat Wreck Chords:
www.fatwreck.com

The Post Punk Kitchen

Find more delicious vegan recipes, see clips
from the show, and purchase DVDs, check
out the post punk kitchen website:
www.theppk.com

The Wildhearts

For more information on the Wildhearts, visit
their website: www.thewildhearts.com

Their new album, *Riff After Riff*, is available
from Gearhead Records: www.gearhead-magazine.com/gearheadrecords

Temporary Residence Limited

The label is definitely living up to its moniker,
having just moved to Brooklyn. It's easiest to
find them online:
www.temporaryresidence.com

Luis Alberto Urrea

For information on books, live readings, and
periodic musings from Luis Alberto Urrea go
to: www.luisurrea.com

Beehive Collective

For more information on the Beehive Collective
and to order their beautiful posters, check out
their website: www.beehivecollective.org

The Decemberists

The literate and somewhat bizarre
Decemberists are online at
www.decemberists.com

Their latest full-length, *Her Majesty The
Decemberists*, is available from Kill Rock
Stars: www.killrockstars.com

The Like Young

Chicago's finest husband/wife band The Like
Young are online at www.thelikeyoung.com

Their brand-new album *So Serious* is available
from Parasol Records: www.parasol.com

articles in this issue:

Iraq: Live Through This

For more updates written by people who are
living through the war in Iraq, check out the
following blogs:

Riverbend

*The woman who wrote the main story in our
Iraq piece.*

<http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/>

Healing Iraq

*A dentist who is in his mid-20s and living in
Baghdad.*

<http://healingiraq.blogspot.com/>

Where is Raed?

*The original "Baghdad Blogger" Salam Pax is
now posting with his blog's namesake, Raed.*

http://dear_raed.blogspot.com/

A Family in Baghdad

*A family blog. These days it is mostly the moth-
er, Faiza, who posts. The sons started their own*

(very different) blogs, as sons will do.

<http://afamilyinbaghdad.blogspot.com/>

Tell Me a Secret

Kahalid's (of A Family in Baghdad) blog.
<http://secretsinbaghdad.blogspot.com/>

Raed's (of A Family in Baghdad) blog

<http://raedinthemiddle.blogspot.com/>

Me Vs. MysE1F

Raed's (of A Family in Baghdad) other blog.
<http://me-vs-myself.blogspot.com/>

A Lifetime Without Clouds

For more information on Eating Disorders,
including PANDAS, and/or infection-triggered,
auto immune subtype of anorexia nervosa in
young children go to: www.anred.com

If you, or someone you know is struggling with
an eating disorder, and you want to seek help
please get in touch with the National

Association of Anorexia Nervosa and
Associated Disorders, or ANAD for short.

Website: www.anad.org

Contact them by phone: (847) 831-3438

Email: anadadvocacy@aol.com.

The Gateway to the North

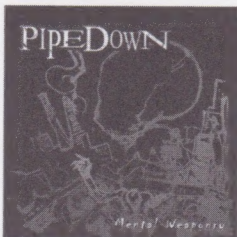
If you are interested in learning more about
border politics, here are a couple websites:

Humane Borders: www.humaneborders.org.

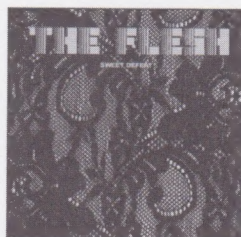
*No one is more interested in saving lives
along the border region. And no one has a
better record at it.*

No More Deaths: www.nomoredeaths.org.

*New organization of activists committed to rais-
ing awareness and coordinating relief efforts.*



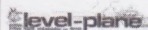
PIPEDOWN
"Mental Weaponry"



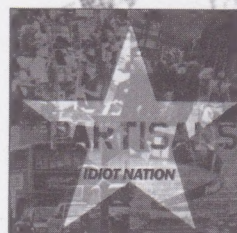
THE FLESH
"Sweet Defeat"



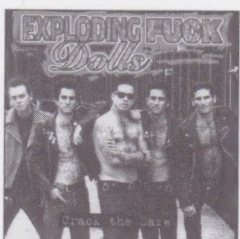
ANODYNE
"Lifetime of Gray Skies"



VARIOUS ARTISTS
"We Ain't Housewife Material"



THE PARTISANS
"Idiot Nation"



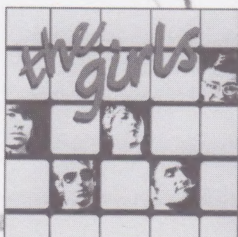
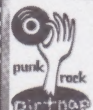
EXPLODING FUCK DOLLS
"Crack The Safe: 1991-2004"



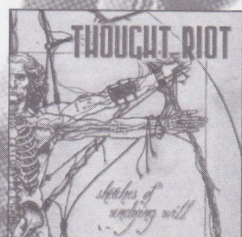
METALUX
"Waiting For Armadillo"



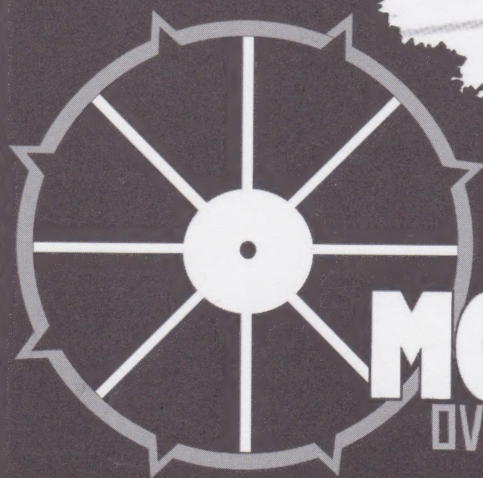
THE MARKED MEN
"On The Outside"



THE GIRLS
"Girls"



THOUGHT RIOT
"Sketches Of Undying Will"



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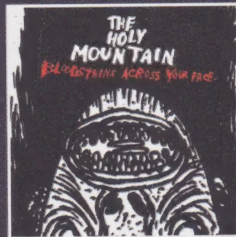
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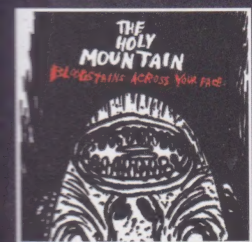
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punk planet 63

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2004

"Baghdad is calm and relatively quiet if you don't count the frequent explosions. Actually, when we don't hear explosions, it gets a bit worrying." — Riverbend

punk planet

ISSUE #63 | SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2004

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